

MAY, 1907

224 PAGES READING MATTER

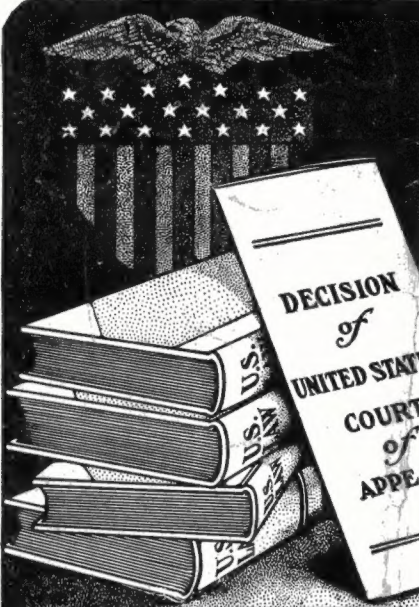
15 CENTS

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. *The Popular Magazine*



PLAY BALL!

The opening of the National Game is only equalled in interest and excitement by the enthusiasm of THE POPULAR readers at each issue of their favorite magazine

An illustration in the top left corner shows a stack of four books with spines labeled 'U.S.', 'U.S.', 'U.S.', and 'U.S.'. A decision slip is placed on top of the books, reading 'DECISION OF UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS'. To the right of the books are several Columbia records, some standing upright and others lying flat. Above the books is a stylized American flag with stars and stripes.

United States Supreme Law Decides It

THE Columbia Wins its suits against record makers whose imitations of Columbia Records were declared infringements of the patented Columbia Record Making Process by The U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals. It is the Superior Record Making Process that results in the Superiority of

Columbia Records

Superior in durability: they last longer than any other records.

Superior in tone production: absolutely free from imperfections and the scratchy sounds that mar the music made by other records.

Superior in perfect reproduction of vocal and instrumental sounds: Every word perfect in **enunciation** — Every note **liquid** and **distinct**.

Superior in every way: No other records are as good at any price.

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For the Whole Family

A song for every heart, a smile for every eye.
The Victor speaks the universal language of
melody and fun in the living breathing voice
of pure reality.

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Victor Talking Machine Company, Camden, N J, U S A
Berliner Gramophone Co., Montreal, Canadian Distributors



The Simultaneous Opening Day throughout America, for the sale of the new monthly Victor records, is the 28th of the month before.

When writing to advertisers, please mention The Popular Magazine.

Advertising The Money-Making Business of To-Day



A New and Growing Field
For Young Men and Women

Great Success of the Powell System of
Correspondence Instruction

From Clerkships and Mechanics to Advertising Managers—From Small Salaries to \$1,200—\$6,000 a Year

By **GEORGE H. POWELL**

THE unbounded interest that is to-day being manifested in the science and practice of modern advertising is due to a revolution in merchandising methods.

This wonderful revolution began only a few short years ago, and it has accomplished so much lasting good that manufacturers and merchants in large and small places alike are now fully awake as to future possibilities, and are therefore seeking in every way to profit by more and better advertising.

POPULAR MAGAZINE readers have for the most part noted the vast increase in the advertising carried in the magazines and local papers, but probably comparatively few have given much thought to that phase which means the employment of an army of young men and women as writers of advertising at good salaries.

And as long as America continues to expand commercially—as long as new capital finds investment in new enterprises—just so

long will the demand for trained ad. writers increase.

Notwithstanding the fact that scores of ad. writers have been trained to fill high salaried positions, yet the demand for GOOD ad. men and women cannot be met—a condition that must of necessity exist for years to come.

Several years ago, when I established the Powell System of instruction, I did so at the suggestion of noted advertising men who saw the need of really expert teaching, and it is my purpose to touch upon the results achieved by former students and briefly point out why I have been so successful.

This may mean everything to those who have common school educations and a real determination to win the big prizes offered in the greatest business of the twentieth century—to those who wish to qualify for positions from \$25 to \$100 a week and more.

I am probably safely within facts when I say that no other business can be so thoroughly

and satisfactorily taught by correspondence as advertising writing. I am also equally truthful in saying that the Powell System is in a class by itself—in its conception of possibilities, in its completeness and simplicity, and in its unquestioned superiority in developing those who begin without previous knowledge of advertising.

Many have written me saying: "I read of



EDNA G. ROBESON,
Advertising Specialist

Won Instant Success as a Beginner

106 Rawson St. ATLANTA, GA.
March 11, 1907

"I wish to thank you for the personal attention you have given my work since I began your course of Advertising Instruction, and I think you will be glad to know of the success with which I have already met. I have written one ad for which I received \$150.00 cash, and have been offered a position as Advertising Manager for an Atlanta firm, but it was not just what I wanted, and so I will keep on until I am offered something in which I think I can do my best work, for I intend to go to the top of the ladder in Advertising Writing."

EDNA G. ROBESON

so many prominent advertising experts who endorse your System; I have never had experience." Now, while I have possibly received far more testimonials from now noted ad. writers than all other advertising instructors combined, yet every one of my staunch supporters began as a Powell student with only a keen, bright mind and a desire to be somebody—and my instruction is designed to appeal only to this class.

Two of my former students have been for some time employed in the largest advertising agency in America; another is manager of a leading advertising agency in Buffalo, and his employers

personally wrote me a cordial letter of public endorsement. One student went to St. Louis about a year ago as assistant advertising manager in the largest jewelry house, and three months later was promoted to the full managership, where he has given absolute satisfaction, and after some twenty others had been tried and discharged. What more splendid endorsement could I offer in support of the Powell System?

Miss Edna G. Robeson and Mr. Chas. W. Wilson, two Powell students, whose portraits appear herewith, are further examples of the great results achieved through the Powell System. Their experience will undoubtedly be of interest to bright young women and men who are thinking of taking up the study of advertising.

In connection with the increasing demand

for good advertising writers I may mention one of the many requests from the publisher of a leading Louisville, Ky., daily paper, whose letter has just been laid before me. He says: "Will you not kindly put us in touch with a competent person to take charge of the advertising department of a progressive Louisville dry goods house? This house is now paying \$100.00 a month for inefficient service." I shall make good the deficiency; but the point is plain that the scarcity of properly trained ad. writers is as much in evidence to-day as during any previous year. Every state is experiencing the same trouble, hence the golden opportunities for the deserving.

I have published two elegant free books—my Prospectus and "Net Results" that I shall be glad to mail to POPULAR MAGAZINE readers who are interested. They are the most entertaining works of the kind ever published, and are valuable both to those looking for more salary and business men looking for more business.

Simply address me



CHAS. W. WILSON

**Increased Business
\$11,000 in Two Weeks.**

FORT WILLIAM, ONT.,
Jan. 25, 1907

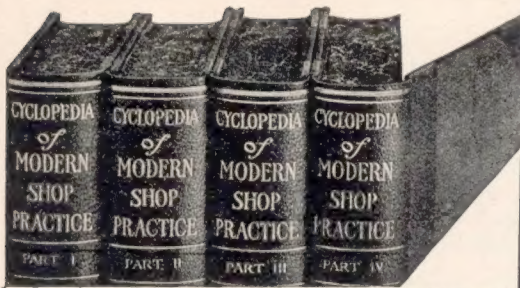
GEORGE H. POWELL,
Dear Sir:—I know you are interested in any progress your students have made in practical advertising.

On Dec 12th the firm I am working for as a Journeyman tailor, asked me how long it would take me to sell \$10,000 worth of their stock, providing I had complete charge of all the advertising. I asked to be given a few hours in which to look over the situation. On investigating I found, that their total business for the month previous did not reach \$4,000, yet, my answer was two weeks.

Let me tell you that in those two weeks over \$15,000 passed over their counters. I received all kinds of congratulations on my success.

CHAS. W. WILSON

GEORGE H. POWELL, 445 Metropolitan Annex, New York



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Sent, Express Prepaid, For Five Days FREE Examination.

If it meets your needs, pay \$2.00 down and \$2.00 a month thereafter, until you have paid \$14.80, the special price. Return, at our expense, if you do not care to keep the books. The only reason this set is offered at such a low price is to acquaint the public with the superior instruction of the American School of Correspondence—these books being partly compiled from the instruction papers.

A 200-page handbook sent free on request if you mention this magazine.

BRIEF LIST OF CONTENTS

Machine Shop Work, Tool Making, Pattern Making, Machine Design, Metallurgy, Gas and Oil Engines, Producer Plants, Automobiles, Elevators, Steam Engine, Steam Turbine Management of Dynamos and Motors, Forging, Sheet Metal Work, Tinsmithing, Mechanical Drawing, Mechanism.

AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CORRESPONDENCE CHICAGO

Mention Pop. Mag. May '07.



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New System Which May be Mastered By Home Study In Spare Hours.

We absolutely guarantee to teach shorthand complete in thirty days. You can learn in spare time in your own home, no matter where you live. No need to spend months as with old systems. Boyd's Syllabic System is different in principle from all other systems. The first radical improvement in shorthand since 1839. It is easy to learn—easy to write—easy to read. Simple. Practical. Speedy. Sure. No ruled lines—no positions—no shading, as in other systems. No long list of word signs to confuse. **Only nine characters** to learn and you have the entire English language at your **absolute command**. The best system for stenographers, private secretaries, newspaper reporters, Lawyers, ministers, teachers, physicians, literary folk and business men may now learn shorthand for their own use. Thousands of business and professional men and women find their shorthand a great advantage. By learning the Boyd Syllabic System, speeches, lectures, conversations, ideas, contracts, memoranda, etc., may be committed to paper with lightning speed. The Boyd System is the only system suited to home study. Our graduates hold lucrative, high grade positions everywhere. Send today for free booklets, testimonials, guarantee offer, and full description of this new Syllabic shorthand system. Address

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Taught by Mail. The original school. 14th year. Big demand for writers. We develop, train, instruct. We get results. Our teachers themselves successful editors. Practical work from the start. Individual instruction. **Easy Payment Plan.** Particulars free. **THE SPRAGUE CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM**
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Box 851, C Scranton, Pa.



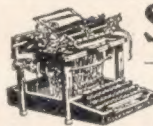
I Teach Sign Painting

Show Card Writing or Lettering

by mail and guarantee success. Only field not overcrowded. My instruction is unequalled because practical, personal and thorough. Easy terms. Write for large catalogue.

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Detroit School of Lettering
Dept. 32, Detroit, Mich.

"Oldest and Largest School of Its Kind"



Save \$50 On a Typewriter

Our Big Annual Clearance Sale now in progress—astounding Bargains in Slightly-used Typewriters—been operated just enough to put them in perfect running order. Better than new—Shipped on approval for examination and test. Judge the quality for yourself. Remingtons, \$20 to \$75. Smiths, \$10 to \$30. We rent all makes Premiers, \$25 to \$75. Caligraphs, \$10 to \$30. We rent all makes \$3.00 per month and up.

FREE Send quick while sale is on for free Bargain Catalogue and save big money. Write today.
ROCKWELL-BARNES CO. 307 Baldwin Building, CHICAGO, ILL.



GOOD PIANO TUNERS Earn \$5 to \$15 per day.

We can teach you quickly BY MAIL. The new scientific Tune-a-Phone method endorsed by highest authorities. Knowledge of music not necessary. Write for free booklet.

NILES BRYANT SCHOOL, 2 Music Hall, Battle Creek, Mich.



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Founded by F. Holme,
Dept. 171, 90 Wabash Ave., CHICAGO

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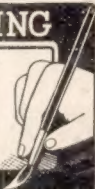


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Earn from \$25 to \$50 per week making high grade catalogue and magazine illustrations. It is practically a new business, painting on the photograph and not by the old method on the negative. Women succeed as well as men. For descriptive circular address

The Mason Studio, Springfield, Mass.

AT HOME BY MAIL



LEARN TO WRITE ADVERTISEMENTS

PAGE-DAVIS SCHOOL

The
Advertising
Situation of
the World
Is At Our
Finger
Ends



Do You Want to Earn from \$25 to \$100 per Week?

If you want to prepare against any uncertainty in your present position and qualify to enter an uncrowded field in which the compensation is always high—study advertising by correspondence. Students who have studied advertising with the Page-Davis School are masters of their business future because they possess the most profitable knowledge in the world and they are earning from \$25.00 to \$100.00 per week.

The whole structure of the business world rests upon advertising and every worker from office man to magnate must understand the underlying principles of advertising to attain the greatest success.

No need to dilate on the splendid opportunities in this Twentieth Century profession. They are obvious to all who can see and read! 30,000 publications in this country proclaim the possibilities of advertising so strongly that no reader with common sense fails to see the wonderful opportunities.

You may say why choose the Page-Davis School? Because business men in the highest rank say "I want a Page-Davis man" when in search of advertising talent and our graduates are proud to say "I am a Page-Davis man." There is a reason! No school has grown

so fast because no school has given instruction so faithfully and our meritorious work is known in every English speaking country in the world and the thoroughness and effectiveness of our course is extolled by all publishers and advertisers who know what constitutes the right kind of advertising instruction.

We receive constantly the most enthusiastic letters of commendation from people who recognize the good results of our work and from graduates who have been directly benefited by our instruction both financially and mentally.

And, here is another point of importance: when you choose an advertising school, choose the right one. A mistake at this critical moment means failure. If you apply for training in the Page-Davis School and your enrollment is accepted the possibility of incompetency, which is another word for failure, is eliminated.

All the details of the advertising business and our method of making you a master of it are set forth in our large, beautiful, intensely interesting prospectus, which will be sent to you **FREE** together with a late list of employed graduates earning up to \$100.00 per week.

Mr. PAUL B. JOHNSON of Moline, Illinois, formerly clerk with no experience in advertising is now advertising manager for the Yosemite Valley Railroad at more than double his former salary and unlimited possibilities for greater success.

Mr. Johnson who is now in the \$35.00 per week class is forever out of the rut of work that yields a mere existence and his achievements are directly credited to the training and co-operation received from the Page-Davis School.



**I
AM
A
PAGE
DAVIS
MAN**

PAGE-DAVIS COMPANY,
Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen:—I am now in the \$35.00 per week class and have been in the advertising field only a year and a half and am going to reach the \$50.00 class before this year is past.

It was your thorough training that enabled me to get away from the life of an express messenger with its long hours and poor pay to join the ranks of successful advertisement writers.

Yours very truly,
GEORGE LEMONS

PAGE-DAVIS SCHOOL

Address either office

Dept. 5171, 90 Wabash Ave.
CHICAGO

Dept. 5171, 150 Nassau St.
NEW YORK



**I
AM
A
PAGE
DAVIS
MAN**

Coca-Cola



Delicious

Coca-Cola

**SUSTAINS REFRESHES
INVIGORATES**

IT SUSTAINS because it is a true food.

IT REFRESHES because it has a slightly tonic effect on the system

IT INVIGORATES because it supplies the elements for physical and mental exertion.

Women of society find COCA-COLA a panacea to tired nerves, a welcomed relief to fatigued bodies. Women in the shop or in the office, brain-fagged and nervous, find COCA-COLA refreshing and healthful. It aids digestion and is genuinely good to the taste.

IT IS THE IDEAL BEVERAGE

"ZOLLENSTEIN," a new serial by **W. B. M. Ferguson**, **AUTHOR OF**
"GARRISON'S FINISH," begins in June; also a new series.

VOLUME VIII

NUMBER 3

The Popular Magazine

MAY

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The Woman In The Case



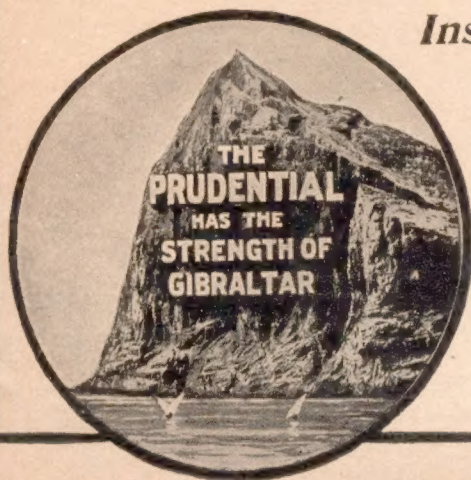
—mother, wife or daughter—is entitled to the
Unfailing Protection of Life Insurance

The ticking of the seconds should remind you that procrastination is the thief, not only of time, but of money, opportunity and family happiness. Delay in Life Insurance may deprive your family of their future support, comfort and education. A Life Insurance policy in

The Prudential

is the husband and father's greatest and most practical evidence of his affection for "the woman in the case."

Insure Now for Her Benefit



Write To-day for Information showing
what One Dollar a Week invested in
Life Insurance Will Do. Dept. 95

The Prudential

Insurance Co. of America

Incorporated as a Stock Company by the State of New Jersey

JOHN F. DRYDEN

President

Home Office:
NEWARK, N. J.

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. VIII

MAY, 1907.

No. 3.

The Lair of the Sun-dogs

By Bertrand W. Sinclair

Author of "A Red, Red Trail," "The Day of the Dog," Etc.

To surmount obstacles, to wrest success from failure, to take big risks and win out by sheer force of determination—this is what makes life worth living to the man with good red blood in his veins. Mr. Sinclair has written a strong story around just such a man and has detailed some of his amazing adventures in the frozen North. It is a remarkable story in many ways and we heartily commend it to your attention.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

A-HUNTING WE WILL GO.



It was Dick Morton's proposition, made one evening while we lounged in his rooms in the Cecil. I wonder if we'd have embraced his plan with such eagerness if we'd

been able to peep for an instant behind the veil of the future! Lord! a man's a puny creature when the Fates are minded to have sport at his expense.

If one had turned loose on Seattle an army of Pinkertons, with instructions to find three able-bodied young men who were unequivocally idle, I doubt if they would have gathered in a more representative trio than Dick Morton, Carter Howe, and myself. It was all very well for Howe—everybody from Puget Sound to Port Los Angeles knows that the second generation of Howe devotes itself mostly to tearing

down the mountain of cash builded by its progenitors; the sum of Howe's daily labors comprised nothing more arduous than filling in checks when occasion demanded.

But for Dick and me the habit of doing things is not lightly to be shaken off. Dick had been handling mining property in the Thunder Mountain country, and, after six years of steady grind, during which he had been down to bed-rock, financially, more than once, the mines made good—so good that the capitalists, who smiled indulgently when he was mortgaging everything but his soul for men and materials, hastened to buy him out at any old price he cared to name.

Dick sold out, partly because, in his opinion, it was the flood-time of fortune, and partly because he was weary of the grind, and now, after a visit to the home folks and a little aimless jaunting from coast to coast, was beginning to find Simon-pure idleness a monotonous occupation for a red-blooded man.

As for myself, I was not a drone by choice. For two years I had been on the *Post-Ledger* staff, and had but lately resigned—for reasons that are of no consequence to any but myself. I was sore at Seattle, and all that pertained thereto, and but for the chance meeting with Carter Howe and Dick Morton, who were classmates of mine at Berkeley, I would long since have packed my scanty belongings and gone a-wandering, south or east, and bound myself once more to the chariot-wheels of some city editor; most certainly I would never have followed the drift of the caribou herds across the devil's playground that lies far to the north, nor have watched the gleaming sundogs in their frozen lair.

As I said in the beginning, it was Morton's proposal. He was stretched full-length on a couch, blowing lazy smoke-wreaths ceilingward. Across the room Howe lay back in a big Morris, a cigarette between his fingers, one long leg hanging over the chair-arm; and in the gathering dusk I sat by a window, content for the time being to smoke a good cigar and watch philosophically the ebb and flow of humanity through the streets of a city that had handled me without gloves. I turned incredulously when Dick spoke.

"There's no use talking, I can't loaf and be half-way contented. Do you know what I'm going to do?" He swung his feet down on the rug with a resounding thump, and went on without waiting for a reply: "I'm going north—up into the *real* north—to the Great Slave Lake country after caribou and musk-ox; furthermore"—with much emphasis—"I want you both to go with me. It'll be the trip of a lifetime. I've wanted to do that ever since I can remember, and this is a Heaven-sent opportunity. Will you go?"

Howe smiled ironically.

"Send the road is clear before you when the old spring-fret comes o'er you,
And the red gods call to you,"

he quoted lightly.

"I'm not joking, and you needn't

fling Kipling at my head," Dick retorted. "Seriously, I've worked like a dog for a long time, and now that I've got out of the harness, commonplace amusements fail to amuse. What I need is a little healthy excitement, something out of the ordinary, and some of the same won't hurt either of you. Why, it will be the finest kind of tonic for town-weary mortals like us. We'll get back not later than Christmas with a corking collection of heads; and a set of experiences that we can tell to our great-grandchildren—if we ever happen to have descendants of that ilk. Recollect how we used to go camping in the Santa Cruz range and come home with appetites and muscles like the ancient cave-dwellers? This will be the original thing in the way of camping. Just say you'll go, and I'll attend to the details. *You* will, anyhow, Tommy?" Dick appealed to me with genuine concern. It was no passing whim; I knew Dick too well for that. He might plan things on the spur of impulse, but, unlike most men, sober reflection usually increased his desire to carry his first impulse to a logical conclusion. I was free; Dick and the big northern woods held forth a most alluring invitation; and so, without a second thought, I promised to go.

For the next hour we pored over maps, discussing routes and paraphernalia, while Howe lay back in his chair and kept up a running fire of banter. He drew diabolical word-pictures of one or the other of us locked fast in the grip of a wounded grizzly, or being butted over fearful precipices by an angry mountain-sheep, and professed astonishment at what he was pleased to term our primitive lust for the chase.

But he threw away his cigarette and changed his tune when Dick leaned back and said with an air of finality: "Of course the shortest way would be down the Athabasca River, but the other way is the best, I'm sure. We'll go by boat to Victoria, the C. P. R. to Edmonton, where we can rustle a pack outfit to take us to Peace River Landing, and thence by canoe to Great Slave Lake."

"How long," Howe asked carelessly, "will it take to get ready?"

"Three days should be ample time," Dick answered.

"I wouldn't mind going," Howe observed, a bit regretfully, I thought. "I have an idea that the simple life would be a welcome change. But a fellow can't very well rush off to the ends of the earth immediately after becoming engaged."

"Engaged!" It's always a surprise to a man when one of his friends, lifetime friends especially, goes down to defeat before the master archer, and some of that surprise crept into the word that Dick and I blurted forth simultaneously. Howe drew up his eyebrows at our frank astonishment.

"Exactly—engaged," he assured us laughingly. "It's to be announced next Wednesday at an informal little dinner to which you fellows should have received cards ere now."

"When, whom, and how?" Dick demanded, exercising the privileges of ancient friendship.

"You both know her, though I expect you've lost track of her in the last two or three years," Howe returned. "Jean Holliday. And the wedding is to be in the spring—I'm on probation, as it were. The major, I'm sorry to say, doesn't take kindly to my aspirations."

We congratulated him, of course. It isn't given to many men, even those who, like Howe, are born with the proverbial silver spoon in their mouths, to win a girl like Jean Holliday; and if I was a bit envious of his luck, if the coupling of Jean Holliday's name with his went to my head like an overdose of quinin, I didn't allow my mental discomfort to interfere with the heartiness of my good wishes.

I tried to be sincere. A man can't win, you know, at every game he gets into, and I hope I've got sporting blood enough to keep me from feeling hard toward a man who can beat me fair and square at anything. Howe was a good fellow, and Jean—well, I'm not going to talk about her. It hurts. She was a beauty, and heiress to a fortune

that bulked even larger than Howe's, and that's all that's pertinent just now.

"Lucky devil," Dick told him. "I haven't met her, except through the medium of the society columns of divers newspapers, since I've been in exile at the mines. She has done Europe and stormed the heights of Gotham since then, I understand."

Howe got up, a faint smile curving his lips. "Yes, but she has pleasant recollections of the time when we all ran wild together at the foot of the Coast Range. Jean's a thoroughbred Native Daughter; even after two seasons abroad she swears by all things American, from society to scenery. Well, I must go. I'll be around to-morrow and carry you fellows off to lunch. Good night." And he picked up his hat and coat and was gone upon the instant.

"I wonder if he'll go?" I speculated, as we watched him disappear in the elevator with a debonair wave of his hand.

"No reason on earth why he shouldn't, except his own inclination," Dick returned. "If I were going to be married in the spring, you can gamble I'd never hesitate over taking a trip like that; I mightn't get another chance. I hope he will make up his mind to come. Howe's a rattling good fellow when you can get him to break away from the haunts of fashion. We'll have good hunting, anyway, Tommy—a heap better than Howe will find at pink-teas and bridge-parties!"

"Oh, by the way," Dick burst forth again, when we had returned to the room and got comfortably sprawled out, "do you know what started me thinking of caribou and musk-ox? Down at the Coleman dock this afternoon I met an old fellow who took a party of us hunting on Fraser River the year before I got tied up in those mines. 'Peace River' Jule they call him, and he knows the Peace country like a book. I wonder if we could locate him to-night? Come along, Tommy, and we'll hunt up old Peace River—we need him in our business."

We went first to the hôtel, which, Dick said, was the abiding-place of Peace River Jule, and the night-clerk

told us that our man had but a few minutes before gone down to the water-front to watch the docking of a Hong-kong boat.

"That's the *Shawmut*," Dick grunted. "We'll find him at the Oriental dock." So to the Oriental we hastened, and from the vantage-ground of a railing between the harbor-master's office and the big dock we kept watch for the man whom Dick described as a grizzly-whiskered six-footer, wearing a cowboy hat, the spiked boots of a Washington lumber-jack, and a gaudy Mackinaw coat—surely a combination of apparel that no man might mistake.

All along the dock-front sputtering arc-lights lit up the tangled shipping, and threw a yellow glare on passing faces. We leaned against the railing perhaps twenty minutes waiting for Jule's chance appearance. I think that some time in the misty past my ancestors must have been hardy, old, deep-water salts who loved the sea. I know that I have never yet seen a sea-scarred, salt-encrusted ship, polished liner, or grimy tramp slip in or out a harbor without a curious thrill. I forgot the caribou hunt and Peace River Jule altogether, and had eyes for nothing but steamer-lights and the phosphorescent water slapping *glug glug* against the *Shawmut's* bows as she warped into the pier; and when I turned again Dick had found his man, and was beginning negotiations by offering him a cigar.

Dick introduced me as one of the hunting-party. The old fellow's deep-set eyes twinkled at mention of the North.

"Yuh can sure count on me," he assured Dick. "I've had just about all uh this brick-pavement walking and street-car ridin' I can stand. A pair uh snow-shoes'll feel mighty good to my feet again. I can promise yuh some sure-enough huntin' back there, if yuh don't mind roughin' 'it."

With this we bade him good evening, having appointed an hour next day for a session of ways and means, and went back to our hotel. My dreams that night were a strange con-

glomeration of great woods and four-masted schooners, of limitless leagues of tossing sea and far-flung fields of snow. And outside my window a multitude of telephone-wires smote on my sleepy ears with a gamut of sound that ranged from the shriek of tautened cordage in a gale to the soft contralto of a voice I loved.

CHAPTER II.

"WHICH THE SAME I ARISE TO EXPLAIN."

Morning ushered in a messenger bearing to Dick and me invitations to a dinner at the Holliday home. Dick, up to his eyebrows in an article on the respective merits of the "Savage 303" and the "Lee Straight-pull," as sporting rifles, tossed the bit of paper on the table with a careless grunt. But I wasn't interested in guns just then. I fell to twiddling the square envelope, and wondering why, at the eleventh hour, the Holliday hospitality was being extended to me, of all persons.

I guess I'd better make myself a little more clear, and, as a starter, I might explain that Howe was very much mistaken when he casually supposed that I'd "lost track of her the last two or three years." It would have been better for me if I had; I might have foregone the swallowing of some bitter medicine. And in the same breath I'll have to hark back of my connection with the *Post-Ledger* to show you where I stand.

A journalistic accident is what I'd have to class my break into the newspaper field, if any one should ask me how I began. I grew up with the idea that labor of any sort would never be my portion—a delusion no youngster of mine shall ever entertain, no matter how plethoric the family fortune may happen to be. It isn't fair to any kid, that sort of upbringing, for, when the crash comes—and it inevitably does come—he faces a hard, old world, that has little sympathy for his misfortune, and no tolerance for his woful lack of practical wisdom; and if some one

doesn't happen along to lend a helping hand at the critical moment, he goes on bumping into the rough corners of life, and losing heart at each bump, until the veneer of gentility and classic education is stripped clean off him, and he goes down into the gutter like any other unfortunate. That, with variations, is the ultimate disposition of a rich man's son who happens to grow up in the belief that he is one of the favored few who shall neither toil nor spin. It's a bitter road. I know, for I've traveled it. And but for the grace of a helping hand, I, too, might have joined the moldering flotilla of human derelicts that rot in the midst of our social Sargasso Sea.

When the grand crash came I was just turned twenty-three, and about as inconsequential a specimen of the genus Native Son as a close study of the entire species would reveal. When, on the heels of my father's sudden death, his lawyer sent for me, and kindly but firmly informed me that henceforth I must paddle a humble canoe instead of occupying the star stateroom on an ocean greyhound, there were just two things to console me for the loss of what I'd been taught to consider my birthright—one, that my mother hadn't lived to sorrow over it, and the other that there was no dishonor attached to the hopeless mess my father had made of things. Mismanagement, misfortune, and extravagance a-plenty there had been, but nothing worse.

There was enough left to pay every debt, and thus it came that when the tangle was straightened out, I found myself heir to a bundle of "paid-in-full" bills, notes, and mortgages. I have them yet. They serve to remind me that things temporal can pass away like snow before a thaw in the spring.

Beyond a mild wonder as to how a fortune that ran into several figures could vanish so completely in one short generation, I had no qualms. The world, so far, had been for me a happy hunting-ground, and the egotism of inexperienced youth bade me believe that I had but to make an effort, and lo! brilliant success would be mine. I

didn't know that this is a day of specialists; I didn't know that the professions and business alike clamored for experience—experience with a capital E. Trained ability—trained to the minute, like a 'varsity eight or a champion pugilist—you had to have it to make yourself felt.

But I didn't know this—oh, there was a heap I didn't know those days. And there was no one to tell me, so I spread my wings for a self-supporting, fame-winning flight—and brought up against the grim realization with a dull thud.

There was no place for me, it seemed, in the complicated mechanism of commercial life; no niche, no groove I seemed to fit. I could do many things, but no one thing well.

Before long the sickening conviction forced itself upon me that I was in a pretty bad fix. I'd tried every avenue that offered hope of decent living, and they were all closed. I had an education and ideals and ambition, but I had nothing to eat; and neither ideals nor ambition thrive on an empty stomach. Yes, it came to that. I'll omit the details; but I have vivid recollection of the fact.

When it came to a show-down, I would cheerfully have dug ditches or shoveled coal. Somehow, though, I couldn't manage to convince the men in charge of such work that I was competent to fill a laborer's place. It was either a gruff "Got all the men we need," or "Ever do any shovelin'?" and I had to admit that I was a stranger to a shovel. I had strength and brains, all right, but I didn't know how to use them, and good men were too plentiful for any individual, firm, or corporation to pay me wages, and in the same breath teach me how to earn them.

In one year I was Failure personified; a hunger-stricken, confidence-shaken Failure. A bit of stubborn pride and an atom of self-respect were all that stood between me and utter degradation. So, you see, I needed the helping hand when it came.

I was walking down Montgomery Street in 'Frisco—the 'Frisco that was

—when I ran into Ellery Baird. There was no chance to dodge him as I'd succeeded in dodging other folk I knew—maybe it's sinful pride, but a man can bear the yoke a deal easier, I find, if none of his more fortunate friends are by to see how it galls him. He had me by the shoulder, and was bellowing profane greetings into my ear before I could escape. Nor did he overlook my plight, not for a moment; the journalistic instinct that grasps like a flash the salient features of a situation was pretty highly developed in Baird.

"You everlasting, stiff-necked idiot," he blurted at me an hour later in his rooms. He had taken me with him, perforce, and under his genial influence the story of my lean year had leaked out. "Why the devil does a man have friends if he doesn't use 'em? Why didn't you come to me? Oh, yes"—as I protested—"I know what you'll say. But that's rank foolishness. Anyway, I can put you in the way of helping yourself, Thomas, my son, without putting you under any obligation to me."

Six months previous I'd probably have side-stepped his big-hearted offer. But, you see, I'd been taking a course in the Big University, a school that accepts students without regard to creed, color, or scholarly standing; a school that says "This is so," and "That is so," and hammers the truth of its teachings into you with a rod of iron. The latter period of my tuition had bred in me a new philosophy of life, and I accepted Ellery Baird's help in the same broad spirit that prompted him to offer it.

Baird was city editor of the *Comet*, and the *Comet* just then was splintering lances on the political armor of a rotten city administration. So he was a busy man. I don't know what he intended to put me in the way of; he never told me, and I didn't ask him. But I know he didn't have the ghost of an intention of putting me on the staff. That was purely the result of chance—and who shall say that chance isn't a mighty factor in the turn of a man's career?

It was the second day after our meet-

ing. I was fed and decently clothed once more. I'd gone down to the *Comet* office, for I had a curiosity to behold a newspaper in the making, to see "the wheels go round." In a lull Baird confided to me that he would give a heap for an interview with a certain railway magnate who was stopping at the Palace—something about a terminal deal in which the city was tangled up.

"Well, why don't you go after it?" I asked.

He told me, then, with a wry face, that for two days the wily one had defied the efforts of his best men. Now, it happened that once upon a time my father and I had gone quail-hunting with this same unapproachable gentleman—in fact, he and my father had been pretty chummy—and it came into my head that if any one could induce him to talk, it was I. A foolhardy guess, perhaps, but I acted upon it, with Baird's amused and hopeless sanction. He staked me to pencil and copy-paper, and posted me briefly on the way to go at my quarry.

Well, I landed that interview; and it was a gem. Likewise a "beat." That was my passport to regular assignments. Before long I was a fixture with the *Comet*; as much of a fixture, that is, as anything in journalism can be.

I had found my niche. I loved the work, and I put heart and brain into every effort. And when Baird came to Seattle to take charge of the *Post-Ledger* city room he brought me with him.

Here's where Jean Holliday and the peppery major come in. Baird stood by the helm of the *Post*-etc., a little over a year. Then the East reached out a long arm, and took him to itself—a little way the East has when a Western man proves his worth. There was a confab of the powers before he left, and I was tendered the vacant place. Rather a meteoric rise, even in a field that's always producing exceptions to every known rule—probably that's why I fell so soon—and so hard. I'd no reason to expect such luck, but I ac-

cepted thankfully, asking no questions. Then only did I discover that Major Holliday, with his emphatic "By thunder, sir!" his brick-dust face, and white chin-whisker, was the autocrat who held the *Post-Ledger's* destiny in the hollow of his hand.

He'd been a friend of my father's, but that didn't win anything for me. The major was a success-worshiper. If you could deliver the goods you made a hit with him; otherwise, sentimental considerations cut no figure. I'd demonstrated that I could make good; there was no better man in sight; and therefore I got the job.

A while back I said that I'd left the *Post-Ledger* for "reasons that are of no consequence to any but myself." Perhaps they aren't. But those same "reasons" have some bearing on what follows, and so "I arise to explain."

My relations with the major were purely on a business basis for some time. Then, as the months wore on, I began to know a good many Seattle people, and go out more or less. It wasn't long before I met Jean, and it was like a breath from the California hills to see and talk to her again. Society hadn't spoiled her. She was the same Jean at whose behest Howe, Morton, and I had plunged into all sorts of childish deviltry when we were kids together at Monterey. Do you wonder if I began to dream things? It's a natural law, and there's no evading it.

Without really meaning to, I got into the habit of going out of my way just on the chance of meeting her; and she was always frankly glad to see me, which I took to be a hopeful sign. This went on for quite a while. There was a break of five months, or so, when Jean and her mother were abroad. When they returned I was among the first to call, and thereafter my calls were notable for their frequency. Sel-dom was the major at home. I suppose he spent his days on the trail of the elusive dollar. But he knew every move I made, as you shall see.

A week before my meeting with Howe and Dick, I came down to the office one day at my usual time. On my

desk lay an envelope, my name scrawled upon it in the huge characters affected by Crowley, the managing editor. I tore it open, wondering why he should trouble to write when his office was on the next floor, with stairs, elevator, and two phones all in good working order. Wonder became white-hot wrath when I read the lines enclosed:

The management of the *Comet* requests the resignation of Mr. Thomas P. Hedrick, to take effect Saturday the seventeenth.

Regretfully,

H. H. CROWLEY,
Managing Editor.

It was so unwarranted, a sort of snap judgment, and it knocked the foundations of my air-castle galley-west so brutally and effectually that I jammed the check into a pocket, and, with my editorial death-warrant in one hand, went three steps at a time up to the managerial holy of holies, every fiber of me crying aloud for war.

"What's the meaning of this?" I managed to articulate, planking before him the offending missive.

He was rattled from the start, and began a stuttering explanation of some new policy to be inaugurated. That was a lie, on the face of it, and I had him by the neck before he had time to finish. There was another, deeper reason, and I meant to know it if I had to match myself against the entire staff. In cold blood I'd never have stirred up a ruction over getting discharged; but to be slammed down like that, and the thought of what I stood to lose by it, set me afire. Crowley was no better fighter than liar. It wasn't ten seconds before he was gasping out what I instinctively suspected.

"I had no voice in the matter, honestly, Hedrick," he sputtered. "It was the major—I dare say you know why. He simply ordered me to let you go at once, and make any explanation I chose. His name wasn't to be mentioned, but if you insist on knowing, that's the truth."

That was a bitter pill, and there was no way to avoid downing it. I don't suppose I'm the first man to pay dearly for daring to lift eyes to his employ-

er's daughter. On sober thoughts I realized that there was nothing to be gained by being nasty about it. But it left me in a pretty blue mood—which didn't improve when I went to call on Jean and found her "not at home." Nor did I, though I tried my utmost, succeed in getting a word with her after that. It seemed as if the gods had conspired to turn me down at each and every move.

So, you see, I had a license to do considerable speculating when that Holliday invitation came to hand. I argued that I'd merely been playing the rôle of the foolish moth to let myself get wrapped up in a girl who'd probably never given a thought to me other than as a friend from what used to be "home." I wondered why Howe had never appeared on the scene before; I wondered that he should think I'd live in the same town with her, and "lose track of her the last two or three years"; I wondered—oh, I did lots of fruitless wondering. And by the time Dick closed the magazine he was reading, and cast it playfully at my head, I'd made up my mind that no human agency should drag me to that dinner. I didn't expect to go straight to the bow-wows because another fellow had won the girl I'd set my heart on. But I'm no Spartan to expose myself to an evening of torture for the sake of being polite. I was beginning to understand how a dog in the manger feels.

CHAPTER III.

GOOD-BY, SEATTLE.

This was on a Monday morning. True to his word, Howe appeared on the scene about eleven o'clock, and insisted that we accompany him to lunch. Throughout that meal Dick talked himself black in the face in an effort to induce Howe to change his mind and go with us to the land of musk-ox and caribou. He advanced a line of argument that would have driven a book-agent to drink, out of pure envy, but it merely served to amuse Howe.

"You'd have made a national repu-

tation if you'd taken up law or politics," he laughed. "You've missed your vocation, Dick. Such a gift of speech is wasted on a mining man. But, under the circumstances, you can't pipe me off to an unpeopled wilderness on such short notice; not if you were Pan himself."

Dick grimed. "Oh, well," he retorted, "I dare say it is foolish to expect you, in your present state of exaltation, to do anything but moon around and congratulate yourself, and wonder how it happened."

After lunch Howe left us, and we went back to the Cecil. A little later Peace River Jule came, and we fell to making plans again. When it came to a question of supplies, Jule pointed out that we would avoid the bother of customs and freight by purchasing our outfit, outside of guns and personal kit, at Edmonton, where our journey by rail ended and the northern trail began.

"That's easy," Dick remarked. "We could start to-night if we wanted to. I wouldn't mind, either, if it weren't for that dinner. I'd like to see the future Mrs. Howe again. I suppose I should have called; I would if I'd known they lived here now. Howe, I expect, is responsible for the cards, and it would be rotten bad form to rush off now. Anyway, we can leave early enough to catch that Victoria boat."

I didn't commit myself about that dinner. Though I was firmly resolved not to go, I couldn't say so. It would have looked odd, because I had no reasonable excuse. I concluded to peg along as usual until Wednesday, when I could conveniently develop a roaring headache or a troublesome tooth—anything that would serve. Rather a sneaking way out of it, maybe, but I really hadn't the heart to face an evening of polite chatter, nor self-control enough to greet the major as one should greet his host, when he knew, and I knew, that in a business way he had practically cut my throat; it was bitter enough to know that I'd lost, without having *her* held up before me as another man's prize. A fellow can take a lot of disagreeable medicine—if

he isn't handicapped right at the start by an overdose.

Monday evening, Tuesday, and Wednesday forenoon passed by with nothing out of the ordinary to disturb us or our plans. Everything was in readiness for our departure. Our tickets were in our pockets, our baggage checked. All that remained was to attend that dinner, get back to the Cecil in time to change clothes, and catch the boat.

We had lunched, Dick was down in the office, and I had stretched myself on a couch with a cigar and a book, when the phone tinkled an insistent call.

"Hello!" I growled into the mouth-piece.

"Is this Dick?" came back in Howe's unmistakable drawl.

"Nay, nay, Pauline!" I answered. "This is Tommy."

"Oh! Well, I just wanted to make sure you fellows were in," Howe went on. "By the way, you're booked to go North to-night, aren't you?"

"If nothing happens," I returned. "That's the way our tickets read."

"All right. I'm going to call Dick's bluff and go along: I'm sending some things around to your rooms, so don't go out for a few minutes. I'll see you later. Good-by."

I hung up the receiver, and sat down wondering why—a great, big why. Something serious, no mere whim, I felt, had caused Howe to change his decision at the last minute. I scented a story; the reportorial microbe getting in its insidious work, you see.

While I was still in the cogitative mood Dick came in. Howe evidently meant to abide by the message he had telephoned, for a porter followed bearing gun-cases galore; enough shooting-irons, in fact, to arm all three of us. Howe, I discovered afterward, had some theories about different styles of rifles that he wanted to put in practise; hence the unusual number of guns.

"He's going with us, after all, Tommy," Dick jubilantly informed me. "He sent these traps and a note saying

that he'd meet us at the dock to-night, if he couldn't get around sooner."

"He telephoned me a while ago that he had made up his mind to go," I replied. "Wonder why he held off so long?"

"Search me," Dick answered lightly. "You can ask him to-night. I suppose we'll see him at Holliday's."

"You may," I responded, in as matter-of-fact tone as I could muster. "I don't believe I'll go."

"What!" Dick stared.

"I'm feeling altogether too seedy to attend any such function," I said wearily, and, though Dick looked his surprise, he forbore urging, and asked no pointed questions, which was the one thing I dreaded. If he'd guessed why I shirked that dinner, he would have been sympathetic; but the chances are he'd likewise have slapped me on the shoulder and insisted that I "brace up and face the music."

Maybe it wasn't very good form to wait until the very last moment, when I had no intention of going at any time, but I didn't much care just then whether I shattered the conventions or no. Anyway, I sent my regrets by a messenger, and settled down with cigar and book to put Jean Holliday out of my mind for that afternoon, at least.

Six o'clock drew on apace. Dick dressed, and went his way, half-angry, half-puzzled at my defection. Tell the truth, it was a thin excuse, and one that I was nowise proud of. I don't like petty subterfuge—but there be times when a white lie will smooth the road for a harassed soul, and no one be harmed thereby. If everybody spoke the truth, and nothing but the truth, without regard to place or hearers, this would be a turbulent old world to live in.

When Dick had gone I went down to dinner in the café, and that finished, I went out on the street and drifted carelessly along with the unheeding crowd. The old fascination of the water-front, with its tarry smells and creaking cordage, its jabber of many tongues, and the low moan of an unquiet sea, drew me irresistibly, and I swung along

Second Avenue, down Cherry Street, and so to the P. C. docks as a needle swings to the pole. There, among the long, shed-roofed wharves, where tall-masted ships and giant-funnelled steamers vomit, by aid of screaming winches, cargoes gathered from the four quarters of the earth and all the ports that dot the seven seas, I stayed until my pockets were empty of tobacco and the evening was far spent.

Ten minutes after I got back to the Cecil Dick returned from Holliday's.

"Has Howe showed up yet?" was his first abrupt query, the moment he was inside the door.

"No," I said, "he hasn't appeared. Why didn't he come with you?"

"I haven't seen him to-day, except for a few minutes this afternoon," Dick blurted out. "He wasn't at Holliday's to-night. I missed him, and asked about him, like a blundering idiot, and they were so painfully non-committal I smelled a rat right away. There's been some sort of upheaval, Tommy. It has been the flattest evening I've spent in some time."

"How did Jean seem to take it?" I inquired guardedly.

Dick shrugged his shoulders. "When a woman like Jean Holliday has on her society mask, no man may say what lies beneath," he observed laconically. "I fancied that Howe was a bit under the weather when we met to-day. I wonder what the row is?"

That was my first thought, too. What could the trouble be? Howe wasn't the man to lightly forswear his plighted word; and Jean—I'd known her too long and too well to believe that, having once given her heart to a man, she would throw him over for any trifling cause. But everything pointed to a rupture—why else would Howe decide to go North, on the very day his engagement should have been announced to the world?

I didn't have much time to indulge in speculation, sentimental or otherwise. Dick was out of his evening clothes and into a gray suit while one could roll a cigarette. He snapped his suit-case shut and turned to me.

"Go ring for a hack, Tommy," he commanded. "We'll take our things to the dock, so that we won't have to bother with them if we should be compelled to make a dash for it at the eleventh hour. I'm going to look around for Howe," he explained. "It's just possible that he has taken this thing too much to heart, and gone out on a limb. He used to travel a pretty fast pace, you know, and if there has been any trouble, he might have broken loose again. We've got an hour and a half before the boat sails."

I called a hack, and we bundled in. At the dock we found Jule, philosophically awaiting us, and to him we consigned our belongings. At the dock office we learned that Howe had sent down his trunk early in the afternoon. From the same place we telephoned to Howe's rooms at the Washington, whereby we discovered that he had not been in since three o'clock. Then we headed up-town to make a round of the places where we judged he might be.

From one point to another we dashed with what speed the city laws allow a hack to make. When there remained of the hour and a half only a scant twenty minutes, and we had made up our minds to postpone our sailing that night, Dick, with his ear glued to a telephone-receiver, gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"Yes, yes," he spoke rapidly. "One of Mr. Howe's friends. What's that? Yes, we'll be there in three minutes."

He slammed the receiver onto the hook with a force that must have jarred Central, and made for the hack, I at his heels.

"To the Chancellor Café," he ordered.

Once under way, Dick swore audibly.

"Howe's at the Chancellor," he declared, "roaring drunk. Got possession of the second floor, and he's raising pure, unadulterated hell! That was Webber, the manager, on the line, and he's sure in a sweat. Begged me to come and take him away quietly. He doesn't want to call in the police on account of the publicity."

Webber, a portly, intelligent-looking German, met us at a side door, and he was in a sweat, literally as well as figuratively.

"Dis way, chentlemen," he implored. "*Himmel!* he vill der house bring down about our ears."

Up a short flight of stairs and half-way along a wide corridor he led us, pausing before a heavy set of double doors, tight shut. From within came sounds of rending wood and smashing glass.

"*Ach Gott!*" Webber groaned. "Alretty he has der guests driven out, and now he der furnishing wrecks. For der luff uff Heaven, chentlemen, take him away. Ach, such a destruction!" He produced a key and stood hesitating.

"Damn the destruction!" Dick told him roughly. "Don't stand there yawping about it. Open the door."

Gingerly he inserted the key and turned it in the lock. The doors slipped noiselessly apart in well-oiled grooves, and we got a glimpse of a good-sized banquet-hall; a banquet-hall that seemed to have been visited by a lively earthquake or a half-baked cyclone!—and in the center, hatless, stripped of coat and vest, was Howe, methodically smashing costly china and polished glass over the leg of an upturned table. For a moment he did not notice our entrance, and for a moment we were too dumfounded to speak. Then he saw us, and whirled, with a cut-glass decanter poised to throw. Webber scooted to cover at the first hostile demonstration.

"Howe," I cried, "have you forgotten that we are due to sail in fifteen minutes? Come on, like a good fellow, or we'll miss the boat."

"Haven't forgotten," he called back, and shattered the decanter against the opposite wall. "Catch the boat at ten-thirty. Got five minutes to finish this job"—a half-dozen plates went the way of the decanter—"ten minutes to catch the train"—*zip!—clatter!—crash!* He caught up a chair and attacked a side-board, as if it were a personal enemy.

Not an inch could we budge him.

Physically we could have mastered him, no doubt; but some one would certainly have been hurt in the scrimmage, and, as he had about completed the destruction of everything breakable before we arrived, it seemed foolish to precipitate a fight; a few dishes more or less didn't cut much figure in the grand total.

So we waited, albeit impatiently, while Howe raged up and down the room. When the five minutes was up, he swung back a heavy goblet, and with a precision a man in his condition could hardly be expected to have, shattered at one throw the face of the big clock that adorned the wall, and turned to us ready to go. Hurriedly, I assisted him into his clothes, while Dick made peace with the outraged Webber.

We got Howe into the hack and started for Pier A, our driver, under the persuasive power of Dick's pocket-book, knocking the speed ordinances of the city into flinders at every block. Yet, despite the bumps and the swaying, Howe was as limp as a rag before we reached the dock. I made no apologies for him; I think none the less of him for that mad hour! He isn't the first good man who has gone wrong, temporarily—and God knows he had a reason.

The last warning toot of our steamer had gone shrilling out over the city when we clattered into the pier and carried our helpless burden up the gangway and down to a berth. That done, we left him, and while he slept peacefully in the stateroom below, Dick, Jule, and I stood on the after-deck of the *Victorine* and watched the serried street lights of Seattle glow like a myriad of fireflies, as the whirling screws hurried us out of Elliott Bay.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ATHABASCA APE.

It isn't such a long-jump from Puget Sound to Edmonton; three days it took us, if memory serves me right. Before we disembarked from the *Victorine*, Howe was normal again, self-contained,

languid, and prone to behold life with a half-cynical, half-humorous eye. He never referred to that night of ungodly rampage in the Chancellor Café, nor did he ever speak of Jean and the engagement that should have been announced. Otherwise he was his old self—and yet not quite. Some men can be hard hit and carry it off lightly, but the best of them will drop their guard, now and then, and the raw hurt will show.

While Dick and Jule rustled a string of packhorses and purchased the supplies that were to last us for the next four months, Howe and I had nothing to do but wander about at our own sweet will. I'm rather impressionable, I suppose, but I would have been satisfied to remain indefinitely in Edmonton, just to watch the freight teams and prospectors and Indians come and go like pictures in a kinetoscope. Life and movement there wasn't ordered after the fashion of established, cultivated civilization.

To-day the town might lie quiet in the brilliant sunlight, and to-morrow the streets might be a welter of dust and sixteen-horse teams. One could go to bed with the conviction that before morning the town would be torn up and carried away by these stalwart knights of the long lash, and lo! at sunrise nothing remained to show that they had passed, save the dead ashes of their camp-fires and faint dust-clouds on the horizon.

Bearded, sun-burned men came down upon us from the sky-line, at the tail end of twenty packhorses, and the next wayfarer perchance afoot, leading a solitary mule—from whence, none knew nor asked; camped, ate, drank, and gambled, if the mood seized them, and went their way again—whither, none knew, nor cared. Singly, in pairs, and by hundreds, these sons of unrest stalked the streets of this frontier town, careless, independent, hopeful of what fortune the new country might hold in store.

Sometimes came silent, bronze-faced Indians with herds of spotted ponies, stealing in and out the trading stores

as their fighting forebears stole among the teepees of the enemy. These, also, like the prospectors, took no count of time, but when the spirit moved them, be it bright noon or blackest night, struck their lodges and vanished.

One afternoon Howe and I sat on the river-bank listening to the squeak of the ferry-cable that crosses the north Saskatchewan at this frontier outpost. In the morning we, too, would cross the crooning river and fare forth into the wide, unpeopled territory beyond. Howe took out a fresh cigarette, and broke a long silence.

"Tommy," he said, "do you know that it was in this country my grandfather laid the foundation of his fortune?"

I did not know, and I said so. My tone was a question, and Howe proceeded to answer it after he had lighted his cigarette.

"You remember how the old gentleman used to sit around in the shade smoking that everlasting long-stemmed clay of his, at peace with himself and everybody but my mother—she thought a clay pipe was hopelessly plebeian, and made fruitless efforts to wean him away from it. Now, you'd hardly think that mild-visaged old fellow had been a rip-roaring adventurer in his day. Fact, though. Two or three years before he died I happened to be at home for some time and got better acquainted with him in one week than I'd managed to in all my previous lifetime. He took a great notion to me, and used to talk by the hour about his early life, and one day he spun me the most amazing yarn about this northern country.

"He was an Englishman, you know, and not overly well-to-do, I judged from his story. So when he was about twenty-two he indentured himself to the Hudson's Bay Company for a term of six years as a hunter and trapper, and was shipped to York Factory along with several other equally misguided fortune-seekers. He was transferred from post to post until in course of time he landed here at Edmonton—which wasn't Edmonton then, but a post called St. Anne. Well, I dare say the

company wasn't actuated by philanthropic motives when they drew up those six-year indentures. Anyway, before long Gran'dad Howe developed a large sized grouch at the way he was being treated, and decided that he would emigrate; which wasn't as easy as it might have been. Those days, you know, the Hudson's Bay Company ruled an immense territory, by grace of an ancient charter from the British crown, and deserters were harshly dealt with. But he and another young fellow managed to get away unobserved, with the idea of making their way to eastern Canada, where indentured slavery was frowned upon.

"Their equipment for what promised to be a three or four months' jaunt was what you might call rather light: two muzzle-loading guns of prehistoric pattern, a few pounds of powder and ball, a skinning-knife apiece, and a little bundle of salt and tea. They started out bravely enough, but it came cloudy weather, and they lost their bearings. Instead of traveling east, they bore off to the north, and winter overtook them on what the old man afterward judged to be a fork of the Peace. They had a fearful struggle to live during the first cold weather. Then they fell in with a party of friendly Indians, and spent the rest of the winter with them. In the spring they said good-by to their red hosts and faced south once more, to have a try at gaining the prairie country, where buffalo-meat was easy to get, and where they could travel by the sun, which wasn't possible half the time in the woods. They didn't go to eastern Canada, however; when they struck the open country between the north Saskatchewan and Red Deer River, they met some traders from south of the line, and went with them to a post of the American Fur Company on the upper Missouri River.

"That's how the old boy landed in the United States. The amazing part of it was that in their dash for liberty they happened on a sand-bar back there"—Howe waved a hand across the river—"that yielded a double handful of fine gold-grains to their crude ef-

forts at placer-mining. Their finding it at all was pure accident. There was no great quantity, either—about fifteen hundred dollars between the two—but it gave the old man a taste for more, and furnished him the means to travel when the California excitement began—and you know how he fared there."

Howe is close to six feet, and built accordingly; but he is, normally, about as fastidious and luxury-loving a person as I know. I could not help wondering just how he would fare should the heroic experiences of his grandfather ever fall to his lot.

"It was literally a case of the fittest surviving in those days," I remarked, as we strolled back through town.

"Rather," Howe assented. "But, you know, I shouldn't wonder if——"

We had turned a quiet corner and come abruptly upon a scene that was in sharp contrast to the general calm that for a brief space of time was hovering over the little town.

In the space between two empty buildings, screened from all eyes save our own, two men were fighting savagely, like bulldogs, without a sound but the quick respirations of their overworked lungs. Around the two principals danced an undersized, evil-looking citizen, sharp eyed and hooked of nose, the sort of man one instinctively associates with cold steel. He was circling warily about, so intent on getting a whack at one of the combatants that he did not see us until a sudden twist of the fighters gave him an opening and he lunged wickedly, with a keen-pointed hunting-knife, at one blue-shirted back; he saw us then, and the manner of our appearance must have surprised him mightily, what little time he had to consider the matter.

Howe shook off his languid air long enough to make a long jump and a beautiful kick that caught parrot-beak fair in the stomach before his knife could get home, and I helped the good work along with a hearty punch on the angle of his villainous jaw. Between us we put him down, and his interest in that fight ceased for the time being.

Not for a fraction of a second did

the fight slacken, nor did either man betray knowledge of our presence, except that he of the blue shirt, as he dodged a swinging blow from his adversary, panted: "Kill that Frenchy if he goes to get up!"

I don't believe in assuming the rôle of self-appointed peacemaker. As a general thing, when men get into the notion of fighting it's good policy to let them have it out—with due regard to fair play. And, having put a quietus on the fellow with the knife, Howe and I stood back to let the other two settle their dispute, whatever it might be, in the fashion they had elected.

The blue-shirted man was a glorious fighter. As tall and as generously framed as Howe, with the lean, browned features that seem to be a characteristic of prairie men, he was muscled like an athlete and gifted with the lithe quickness of a mountain lion. One sleeve of his shirt was ripped from shoulder to wrist, and in the open space his biceps and forearm glowed pink and white; hard, ropy sinew under the skin of a child.

Planted squarely on pillarlike legs surmounted by a body of wondrous girth, the whole topped off with a face that resembled nothing so much as that of an enraged baboon—if baboons ever have scrubby red whiskers and wishy-washy blue eyes—the other man stood, a huge bulk, and a hardy one, to judge by the hammering he took without going down. His great arms swung ceaselessly in an effort to land a blow. But for him the tide of battle had set the wrong way; with a fair break he was no match for the other. And he began to realize it, for of a sudden he ducked ponderously and attempted to gather the blue-shirted one to him with a sweep of his big arms. There was a mix-up of arms and legs, a mighty tussling on the ground for a moment; then they flattened out, one corded arm of the blue-shirted man hugging the other's bull-neck in a strangle-hold, the deadliest grip professional wrestlers know.

For perhaps a minute he kept this hold, putting forth his strength till the

muscles of his neck and shoulders stood out in tense knots and ridges with the strain. The bulky one's struggles grew weaker, ceased altogether, and the other let go and stood up, panting, just as Howe and I started forward to break his grip, lest he should choke the man to death on the spot.

"Well, my friend," said Howe sentimentously, "you fixed him good and plenty."

The big fellow looked at us and then at the two stretched on the ground, gasping like new-landed trout. He held forth his hand, all bruised about the knuckles.

"Shake," he said. "Yuh was sure a friend in need that time."

"By Jove!" Howe cried. "He did get to you with that knife."

The man put his hand to his shirt, and it came away all splotted with red. He smiled a bit. "Frenchy got a lick at me just before you fellows showed up. I kicked the son-of-a-gun, and that kinda feazed him for a while. 'Tain't much of a cut, though; nothin' to what I'd 'a' got if he'd made proper connections."

"You come with us and get it dressed," commanded Howe. And we departed for our hotel forthwith, leaving the enemy where they had fallen. Neither was more than temporarily hors de combat, and we had no sympathy to waste on thugs of their ilk. One's feeling is generally with the under-dog, and, besides, there was an atmosphere of wholesome honesty about the man whose cause we had championed; you knew on the instant that he was either a stanch friend, or an open, fair-fighting enemy.

Such was the manner of our introduction to Buck Harrison, Buck of the cheerful smile and optimistic outlook.

Of his quarrel with the Ape and François, the Frenchman, he told us little, being the sort of man who speaks sparingly of a wrong, save to the doer thereof. We gathered that Buck had originally been a cow-puncher, that he had taken to prospecting, with hunting and trapping as a side-line, and that some three months before the rapacious

Ape and his parrot-beaked partner had raided Buck's store of grub, traps, and ammunition at his cabin on a branch of the Athabasca, and brought him perilously close to starvation and kindred evils by reason of the theft.

"I was down on the river fishin'," Buck told us, "and they sure made a clean sweep-uh that cabin. All I had left was a twenty-foot fishin'-line, and that's a mighty light outfit when you're four hundred miles from nowhere."

Though he lacked evidence of the sort that might be demanded by a jury—to which Buck had not the remotest intention of carrying his case—he was morally certain of his men, and in his straightforward way taxed the Ape with it when they met by chance on that quiet by-way in Edmonton, and thus precipitated the fight.

So Buck was, as he phrased it, "afoot and alone and a long way from home," and we were rather glad of it, for he made a welcome addition to our party when Dick Morton proposed that he help Peace River Jule shoulder the onus of piloting us in our Northland wanderings.

CHAPTER V.

OUR MIDNIGHT VISITORS.

Without incident we made the long trek from Edmonton to Peace River Landing, marching gaily through solid miles of silent, odorous forest, untouched by vandal ax or saw. Little open meadows, watered by clear, cold springs and lush with sweet-smelling grasses in which our horses reveled, served us for camping-grounds. Some day hardy souls will push the frontier beyond the Peace and carve an inland empire out of that quiet wilderness, and those dim Indian trails we followed will broaden into highways and hum with the traffic of men; but as yet the woods, untraveled and unmarred, crown ridge and hollow as calmly impassive as they stood long before the first white men ventured among their leafy aisles. From sun to sun we heard no sound nor saw any movement that was not purely of the wild and its soft-footed denizens.

At the Landing we started our horses back and loaded dogs, supplies, and camp-outfit into the boats that Jule secured from an up-river trader, and we swung into the Peace at sun-up one morning, bending to our paddles like voyageurs of old.

Past Fort Vermilion, halting only long enough to say "Hello" to the voluntary exiles there, past the mouth of Little Red River at the best speed current, paddles, and blanket sails could give, and on to the twin channels where the Peace loses itself in Lake Athabasca and Great Slave River begins. There are rapids in the Peace and Great Slave that wake me up o' nights yet, when I dream of running them. A bare half-inch of frail wood under your feet doesn't inspire confidence when you shoot past saber-toothed rocks and great current-polished boulders, like a runaway horse, with gunwales awash and gobs of dirty gray spume curling over the paddle-blades. But we were lucky, and presently we hove-to at the head of Five Portages—a dirty bit of water—without mishap, four hundred and fifty miles of river-way behind our stern-posts and one hundred and fifty yet to go.

Here at Five Portages the languorous, smoky, Indian summer skies vanished one afternoon before a phalanx of somber, low-scudding clouds from out the northwest, and shortly thereafter the first transient snowfall and the Athabasca Ape came down on us together.

The storm burst on us just at the finish of thirteen weary miles of intermittent portaging, and when it struck we piled our belongings, boats and all, out on the wooded bank and pitched camp until such time as the weather should clear. For two days we squatted around a purring sheet-iron stove, playing seven-up to decide which unfortunate should chop wood when the pile ran low, and listening indifferently to the wind that whooped down the valley, thrusting its icy presence into our very midst when one carelessly opened a tent-flap.

The second night, I think it was, we

turned in early. Buck slept nearest the stove, and quite close to the tent door. For a long time I lay drowsily wondering what secret trouble had played the devil with Howe. There was something—something out of the ordinary—and it sat heavy on his soul. Even Dick worried about him, and studiously refrained from raking up any reminiscences that had to do with Jean Holliday; and Dick, as a rule, is a great believer in the tonic powers of a good "jolly."

It seemed that the farther north we got the more droopy and irritable Howe became. Not consistently, either; there were times when he was as merry as a meadow-lark on a June morning, times when he mounted his conversational charger and unhorsed us all in the lists of repartee. But there was always a reaction. Always came a moody spell on the heels of his gaiety. And at such times he gave me the impression of a man who was hanging onto himself, a man whose nerves were strung to the breaking-point. A fellow doesn't usually go all to pieces if it happens that the course of true love doesn't run so smoothly as it might. He'll suffer—Lord knows he'll suffer, unless his heart's a thing of iron—but time will soothe the hurt, instead of aggravating it, as seemed to be the case with Howe. No, there was something more than a commonplace quarrel or misunderstanding back of it all.

A lot of just such stuff floated through my drowsy brain as I lay there, a lullaby of swishing snow and fluttering canvas crooning over my head. The last thing I distinctly remember was seeing Buck reach forth a long arm and poke a stick of wood into the stove, on top of which bubbled a pot of beans. Right after that I fell asleep.

Some time later the clammy feel of snow settling on my face awakened me. The tent was open, one flap snapping in the grip of the wind, and swirls of fine snow drove headlong through the gap. Outside, a dog barked and his bark changed on the instant to a shrill yelp, a yelp of pain.

I sat up and listened, but there was

no further sound, nothing but the unabated hum of the storm without, and beside me the faint snoring of Dick and Howe. It struck me that Buck and Jule must sleep with heads under cover. Otherwise, they were hardy customers, indeed, to snooze away with snow coming in as though some woods giant stood outside wielding a busy shovel. It was altogether too uncomfortable for me. Reluctantly I got out from between the warm blankets to close the flap, stepping carefully to avoid disturbing our guides. But my care was needless. Neither Buck nor Jule was there. The sheen from the white tent wall and the snow that had settled inside betrayed their absence, and their bedding was thrown back in a tumbled heap, as if the manner of their exit had been hasty.

Where they had gone in the middle of the night, in a howling blizzard at that, and why, were questions I did not feel qualified to answer.

I won't deny being uneasy. Somehow, to me, everything in those brooding Northern woods is tinged with a faint air of mystery. Still, I hesitated to awaken my friends; surely two husky woodsmen could leave camp, even in the little hours of the night, without my needing to be alarmed! But why? And while I hesitated, shivering at the tent door, the dogs—this time the whole pack—set up a determined clamor, in the midst of which I clearly distinguished the voices of men.

The racket woke Howe and Morton, and what little I knew I told them as I struggled into boots, trousers, and coat. Together we sallied forth, lightly clad and armed with weapons of offense, in a fever of impatience to know what all the rumpus was about.

A few paces from the tent we stopped, to locate the noise. Off toward the river-bank the dogs were yapping spasmodically, and thither we ran, buffeted by a lusty wind and enveloped in choking clouds of snow that scourged our bare cheeks unmercifully and sifted through every open space in our clothing.

In front of us, and very near at

hand, a gun cracked, the report a dull boom, muffled in the snow-laden air; presently another and another in quick succession. Then Buck's voice: "Blame it! If I could see, I'd sure fix 'em."

We shouted, continuing to run. Jule answered, and though we could see neither man, we knew from the sounds that they were close at hand. Indeed, Howe almost ran into Jule, and about the same time Dick and I tripped and fell headlong over a pile of stuff lying on the pebbly beach, barely ten feet from the slapping river waves.

"It's them fellers you'n' Buck had the fight with, in Edmonton," Jule yelled, in answer to our anxious demands. "Looks like they was tryin' to get off with some of our grub. See what they carried down here! And I guess they did get some into their boat before we stirred 'em up."

Buck appeared, then, a very wrathful guide, and if his angry tones carried out over the waters, the would-be pil-lagers heard some pungent personal remarks. There was nothing we could do, however, for it was out of the question to launch a boat with any hope of catching the marauders in the thick of that mad dance of wind and snow.

We listened a while, and Dick wasted two cartridges when he thought he heard the creak of rowlocks. But it was just so much ammunition to the bad, Jule declared. So we contented ourselves with carrying back to camp the sacks of flour and sugar and sundry bundles of stuff, and building a fire in the stove; the temperature wasn't what you'd call balmy, and though we stepped around pretty brisk, our teeth were chattering beautifully before we'd finished our little stunt.

"I was kinda dozin' when I heard 'em first," Buck told us, when we had got our fire under way and driven the chill from the tent, "but, holy smoke! I never thought uh *them* jaspers bein' around. I guess the dogs had curled up in the brush, out uh the wind, or they'd 'a' let us know. Anyhow, I thought I heard something, and got up. Might 'a' been a bear nosin' round. So I goes out to the pile uh stuff. The

canvas was turned back, and things messed round some. I see right off it's a two-legged bear; the tracks in the snow was dim on account uh the drift-in', but plain enough to show me it's a human critter. So I goes back and wakes Jule, quiet-like, thinkin' the two of us will sure nail the gentleman, whoever he is. We started to follow his tracks, and missed him. I suppose he come back to the pile another way, and one uh the dogs come alive and waded into him. We heard a bark and a yelp, and all of a sudden here he comes bust-in' through the brush, headed for the river hell-bent for 'lection! Well, we lit into him and went to the ground with him, Jule and me—and it was that baboon-faced muzzler. He let a big beller out uh him, and I was just reachin' for my gun, to stop that sort uh complainin', when first thing *we* knowed that Frenchman—it must have been him—landed on us with a two-year-old club, tumbled me over first pass" (a huge welt on Buck's head attested the weight of François' stick) "and they made their getaway. I did shoot at 'em in the brush once or twice, and again when I could hear their oars a-creakin', but I don't suppose I come within a mile uh them."

"Too bad you didn't get that gun unlimbered sooner," said Dick, while I was moved to unseemly mirth at the spectacle of Buck tentatively fingering the ridge on his cranium. "Do those fellows make a business of plundering people in this country, Buck?"

"Looks like it," Buck grumbled. "I've heard hunters on the Athabasca claim they was dead sure to lose a heap uh stuff if the Ape and Frenchy was anywhere around. The Hudson Bay posts all give 'em the bad-eye; and yuh know what they did to me. They're mostly on the sneak, though. I never knew of 'em doin' anything so nerry as this. Looks to me like they've been followin' us. I never heard uh them so far north before."

"I have, now I come to think of it," Jule observed thoughtfully. "Did they ever winter on the Athabasca or the upper Peace that yuh know of?"

"Never knew where they holed up for the winter, to tell the truth," Buck replied. "I wasn't interested in them two gents till they cleaned me out."

"The Ape, as they call him—and he's sure well named—winters north uh Slave Lake," Jule went on, "with a bunch uh Injuns that won't have no truck with a white man, as a general thing; I guess they think he's some kind of a little tin god. I bumped into him once before, about five years back. We'll have more trouble with that cuss, and don't yuh forget it. He's worse than a road-agent. It would be a Christian act to kill him and that hook-nosed Frenchman first time we bump into them."

"The plot thickens," Howe melodramatically announced. "Our peaceful hunting-trip is about to develop into a punitive expedition. In this country the simple life appears to have drawbacks. We happen to have more grub than the other fellow; ergo, the other fellow seeks to restore the balance, by force, if necessary. Rather a joke on us, by Jove! I didn't suppose you were warlike by nature, Jule."

"I'm not. But it wouldn't be a joke if they *did* get away with our grub and dogs," Jule answered pointedly. "It's a mighty long tramp between houses in this neck uh the woods. And it don't pay to take chances with folks uh the Ape's caliber; I don't believe he's more'n half-human, nohow."

For half an hour or so we smoked in comfort, swearing alternately at the weather and our unwelcome midnight visitors. Finally the wind lulled somewhat, and Jule, after a brief sojourn outside, advised us to turn in.

"You'll need all the sleep yuh can get," he admonished. "It seems to be gettin' warmer now, and, anyway, the back uh the storm is broke. If it's clear in the mornin' we can just as well move on. If we don't have any more setbacks, another week'll see us in the musk-ox country."

We lay down. I cannot speak for Dick and Howe. I think Dick slept soundly, for he always did have a cast-iron nerve; but I dozed fitfully from then till morning, and in my wakeful

moments I observed that Buck squatted by the stove, replenishing the fire occasionally and making frequent trips outside.

Evidently he judged that our supply-pile would be none the worse for watching.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DRIFT OF THE CARIBOU HERDS.

As Jule foretold, dawn ushered in good weather. The snow-drifts were mushy heaps, and black patches of steaming earth began to show ere we finished breaking camp. An inventory of our supplies proved that François and the Ape had got no more than a sack of flour and a small caddy of tea for their pains; though I suppose that was a good haul for them, if they were out of grub. Buck inclined to the notion that they were not in need, but simply following out their thieving instincts with a view to stocking up for the winter. At any rate, we saw no more of them on Slave River.

Having passed the rapids that make life a burden to voyagers on the lower Slave, we again spread our makeshift sails to every favorable breeze and plied paddles with a will, coming shortly to Great Slave Lake.

At Fort Resolution, built where the wooded banks dip down to meet the long reach of heaving green water, we tarried two nights and a day, fraternizing with a post staff whose hearty hospitality was a joy to the wayfarers' soul and worth a thousand-mile journey to behold. And here we acquired further unsavory details anent the grub-stealers who had raided our camp at Five Portages.

"Ye may tak' it frae me," the factor told us emphatically, "that should we be sae fortunate as tae catch yon thievin' loons, we'd hang them tae the stockade wi' scant ceremony. They've been a plague tae this country lang enough. The dirty scum dinna stop at mere thievin'. Either o' them wad cut a man's throat for twa pennies."

Leaving Fort Resolution, we skirted

the lake shore for a matter of ten days, until we reached The Neck, where Slave Lake narrows to a bare twelve miles. Here we crossed to the north shore, and after laboriously traversing a nameless waterway—a creek that Howe promptly christened “The Path of Toil” when he discovered two paddle-blisters in the palm of his right hand—we reached the edge of the muskeg country, and pitched our camp for musk-ox hunting.

Jule and Buck gave us fair and timely warning to cut short our stay. But Dick and Howe were loath to quit the trail of the woolly, droop-horned cattle, and when the first caribou herds hove in sight they clean forgot that they were next door to the Arctic circle with a seven-months’ winter treading hard on their heels. For myself, it was all so new and strange and altogether fascinating that getting back to civilization was the very least of my troubles.

I’m a pretty fair shot, and I love hunting, up to a certain limit—beyond that, the unnecessary slaughter of defenseless animals doesn’t appeal to me. But I don’t believe that any normal, healthy human can resist the desire to prey on the creatures of the wild when they swarm about him; and the endless files of caribou marching south, and, like the locusts, feeding as they marched, was a sight no man could see unmoved.

Heaven only knows where they all came from—northwestern Canada has a big back yard—but as the short days grew steadily shorter, and the dance of the Northern Lights flickered brighter each lengthening night, the caribou herds tramped on apace. By hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands they drove down upon us from the moss and muskegs of the barren North, following the lead of their antlered captains to the shelter of the woods.

Unlike the wary musk-ox, which runs in scattered bands and is exceeding shy of man and all his works, the caribou thinks no evil of his fellows or humans, and, if unharassed, strikes boldly for his objective point, neither halting nor turning aside for rivers large or small.

It will be long and long before I forget the drift of the caribou herds.

All things—good, bad, and indifferent—must have an ending. We had secured several musk-ox heads and hides, a caribou head apiece—and they were beauties—which, with our limited motive power, was all we could reasonably expect to lug home. We had enjoyed three months of glorious outing in a little-known land, and were fain to linger. But Jule delivered an ultimatum which we had no choice but to heed; unless we desired to spend a winter north of Slave Lake, for which he, personally, had no stomach, it behooved us to gain the mouth of Peace River without further delay. So we broke camp regretfully and set our faces toward home.

But we had tarried a shade too long. The skies grew filmy, then gray and lowering. Long before we reached Slave Lake the north wind screeched about our ears, spitting venomous bursts of fine, flourlike snow.

“Not on your life!” Jule snorted, when Dick innocently proposed that we make camp and lie up till the storm abated. “There won’t be any let-up. This is winter. We want to get across the lake before the slush ice freezes, or the Lord knows how long we might have to wait before it would be safe to cross with dog-teams. *Sabe?* As long as we can use the boats, we stay with ‘em, storm or no storm. You’ll find it a pretty tough proposition to waller along on snow-shoes all day, breakin’ trail for dogs.”

Buck grinned cheerfully. “Jule wants to make yuh think you’re strictly up against it,” he chuckled. “I’ve been up and down the Peace and Athabasca both, on snow-shoes. It ain’t a killin’ trip.”

Nevertheless, we paddled down “The Path of Toil” as though the devil himself were at our heels. In truth, between the devil and the weather that presently came upon us Satan would have been the more welcome of the two. Ice caked upon gunwale and paddles and invested our bows with fantastic figureheads as we slipped along between

misty, snow-enshrouded banks; it formed in great chunks on our mustaches, till Dick Morton swore like a longshoreman, and Howe and I in desperation took Buck's amused advice and haggled ours off with a pair of dull shears. The dogs, bred in the North and thick of fur, alone viewed the situation philosophically. Everything was ice or frost, or buried under the ubiquitous snow—everything but the nameless streak of black water that surged impatiently along its channel, hurrying to lose itself in Great Slave Lake. Even it was slowly yielding fealty to the frost-god; inch by inch ice that would bear a man grew out from either shore. A few more degrees of cold, and the black, hurrying streak would be shut away, to gurgle in an icy prison for many changes of the moon.

But while the snow continued to come whirling down, and the skies were hidden behind fold upon fold of sullen clouds, the keener frosts held off, and we were enabled to reach Slave Lake and cross The Neck; albeit, a perilous undertaking, for the lake was a wallow of slush ice.

The crossing ended our journey by boat. Twenty-four hours later the wind hushed, the deep-banked clouds broke and scattered, and with a pale sun glimmering coldly in a steel-blue sky, the bitter winter set its grim teeth for a six months' hold.

Wherefore, our troubles speedily began. We transferred our outfit to the flat-bottomed toboggans we had brought many a mile for that very purpose, leaving the boats to the tender mercies of the wild; rigged our dog harness, and set forth. For three of us the next few days brought many new aches. In time we mastered the swinging stride of snow-shoers, and could hold our own with Buck and Jule. But in the beginning—

So our progress was necessarily slow, what of loose snow and green dogs, and our personal struggle with the man-made, seven-league boots of the North.

Until the lake froze solidly, obviating the danger of weak spots and air-holes, Jule led us through the woods. The

fourth day, by way of the dog-trail—which was a trail we broke with much language that I'd hate to see in print—we made an evening camp in the edge of a stretch of ridgy spruce-patched land, perhaps two miles across. While the rest of us cleared a space for the tent and built a rousing fire, Howe took his gun and went a-hunting. Rabbits swarm in the brush back there, and when larger game failed to come our way, we slaughtered them by the dozen for dog food. The long twilight had faded to a ghostly gray, and our stove-pipe was belching a steady blue column when Howe came in with a furry load across his shoulders.

Buck went out to help keep peace among the dogs while they were being fed—ugly-tempered brutes they were, that would toil all day in the traces and fight like fiends at night. In about a minute Howe called to us; softly, yet with a touch of eagerness in his tone.

"Dick! Tommy!" he said. "Take a look here, will you?"

We slipped out, wondering what he might have to show us. Buck was staring intently, a rabbit suspended in each hand. On a little rise to the north, not more than two hundred yards distant, and limned clearly against the crescent of pale sky that lingered in the northwest, stood the bulky figure of a man. We caught a bare glimpse of him, for he turned and went rapidly out of sight behind the snow-banked ridge as we issued from the tent. But though we could not see his features, the ponderous waddle of him, and his hasty retreat, left no doubts in our minds as to his identity.

Buck threw the two rabbits to the wrangling huskies, and had recourse to a plug of very black chewing-tobacco.

"And Satan appeared, also," he said reflectively. "Now, that misbegotten skunk ain't nosin' round here for his health. I'll just take a look at the other side uh that ridge, for luck. Wasn't he nerry, though?"

Buck picked up his Winchester, hooked his toes under the loops of his snow-shoes, and struck out. Howe grabbed his rifle and followed him in-

stanter; and Dick and I would have gone likewise, but for Jule's remonstrance.

"Hold on," he expostulated. "No use for all of us to go. Maybe that jasper means mischief, and maybe he don't; either way, it's blamed poor policy to go off and leave this camp take care of itself."

Jule's reasoning was correct. Granted that the Ape's object in spying on our camp was to observe the chances for annexing some of our goods, we could hardly give him a better opportunity than to leave camp in a body. In any case, Buck and Howe could see all that might be seen, and even if the Ape was minded to resent being followed a short distance, Buck Harrison and Carter Howe would be an ugly team to tackle. So we stood outside the tent, watching for developments, and contenting ourselves with calling to them not to go too far.

They gained the rise, whence the Ape had vanished, stood a moment, then disappeared beyond. Presently they came in sight again on the crest of another ridge. After a short survey they went on, following the ridge to the west. Somewhere in the distance a shot sounded, distinct but far away, like the snap of a frosted branch. Buck and Howe dodged, and got off the exposed ridge without further dallying, making their way post-haste to camp.

"Well, yuh found that jasper would shoot when yuh crowd him, did yuh?" Jule greeted ironically. "Maybe yuh thought he'd ask yuh down to his camp for supper."

"Aw, dry up, Peace River," Buck retorted. "This ain't no joshin' affair. That red-muzzled cuss is camped over yonder with a whole blamed tribe uh Injuns."

"And by the same token, they didn't care for our society a little bit; very exclusive, by Jove!" Howe informed us. "Did you hear that shot? The bullet kicked up the snow right at our feet. It was one of the noble red men who checked our advance; we saw nothing of our friend the Ape."

"No, but he's there, yuh bet your

life," Jule asserted; "and the Frenchman ain't far away."

"Oh, well, what's the odds?" Howe laughed. "There's plenty of room in this country for all of us. Let's have supper. That's the most important thing just now."

Supper over, Buck and Jule quietly drew the toboggans across the tent front and stacked upon them everything movable about camp. That done, they proceeded to tie a dog to each guy-rope of the tent, so that we were the center of a canine guard. And when Buck lay down on his blankets he smiled whimsically at Howe, who had mockingly derided the defensive preparations, and went peacefully to sleep.

When morning came, however, and we had eaten and packed, and were waiting for the first peep o' day ere we took the trail, Buck led Howe the scoffer a little way from camp and pointed silently to the devious snowshoe tracks that ringed our camp.

"They mean business," Buck quietly said. "All they lack is half a show!"

CHAPTER VII.

BON VOYAGE!

One might call it the fruits of carelessness. Lord knows we'd had warnings enough! Those surreptitious night-prowlings should have put us on our guard. But though Jule and Buck were thoroughly convinced that the Ape and his Indian followers meditated some devilment, we could not bring ourselves to believe that they would openly attack us. Steal from us they probably would, we said, but only if good opportunity offered. So, much against Jule's counsel, we took no great precaution in the way of looking out for trouble while on trail—and thus it happened that before noon that day we paid heavy penalty for our rashness.

I never could tell exactly how it occurred; it was done so quickly and ruthlessly that my mind failed to grasp all the brutal details. There was no skirmishing, no fight. They rushed us

from a near-by spruce-grove as we halted on the edge of a deep gully to plan a crossing. Jule pitched on his face like a falling tree, at the first shot. Buck fell on the gully-brink and rolled over and over to the bottom, where he lay, quite still, half-buried in the loose snow. That much a fleeting glimpse showed me as I sprang for the weapon I had laid on the nearest sled. My fingers never touched it. Instantly I was the central struggling unit in an overwhelming mass of buckskin-clad aborigines; and when my faculties once more regained their normal state Dick and I were prisoners, battered but alive.

I looked nervously about for Howe, and grew half-sick when I discovered him, a crumpled heap in the center of a trampled bloody circle in the snow. Of a truth, the Ape *had* meant mischief; and now the mischief was done.

Why they hadn't shot down the last one of us from a safe ambush puzzled me. No more than three or four shots were fired, and those, judging by the result, had been directed at our guides. Probably they considered us tenderfeet; easy game, once separated from Buck and Jule. Besides, there was the old score against Buck to settle up; though, for that matter, Howe and I had likely earned full measure of the renegades' resentment for our interference in the Edmonton fight. Buck and Howe had paid dear for that, but why not I, also? Why should two of us be overpowered by weight of numbers, and the others shot down like rabbits?

I had little time to speculate on this, though. They straightened out the tangled dog-teams and headed them the other way. One evil-looking, undersized Indian held me under the threatening muzzle of his gun, and another performed a like service for Dick, a few feet away. We stood helpless, watching the cold-blooded ghouls go through the pockets of Jule. François flung a question at the Ape as he walked over to Howe. The Ape poked tentatively with his foot the limp body of our friend, shook his head, and, turning, flung out a brief word of command.

Dick hesitated, with a wistful look

toward Howe, as the dog-teams started, but the Indian threw up his gun with a threatening grunt, and we moved on obediently; no man courts death willingly without at least a fighting chance. And, as we turned our backs on that place of murder, I set my teeth and swore that if a fighting chance came I would take it for the sake of the dead men in the snow.

"God! but this is an awful ending to our trip," Dick groaned, as we tramped along. "I could take my medicine, whatever it is, without a whimper, if it wasn't for getting you fellows into this. It's like a nightmare, Tommy!"

"Kismet!" I answered, donning a mask of hopefulness that was my only defense against utter breakdown. "Maybe we can play even with these devils yet. I wonder if Howe was really dead; they didn't shoot him, did they?"

"No." Dick wiped away a trickle of blood from a bruise on his cheek-bone, and gritted his teeth in impotent anger. "Blast them! They weren't even that merciful. They simply clubbed him down. Oh, how he fought! If he'd had a gun or even a knife—but he fought them bare-handed. A half-dozen of them had me fast, and they were piled three deep on you. We couldn't do a thing; not a thing!"

We said no more. What could we say? There are times when words are an agony; times when a man's brain seethes and his soul is blistered with hot, bitter thoughts, but the tongue is numb, a useless organ.

For five heart-breaking hours we toiled along the back trail, before us the dog-teams and Indians, twenty-five or thirty painted bucks, sinister of visage and squat of stature; and at our heels the leering Ape and François the malevolent. More than once I shivered at the imaginary feel of the parrot-beaked one's knife-blade grating harshly against my back-bone. It would have been so easy for him, and the sort of thing he loved.

It was dark when they drove us into the Indian camp, tied our hands and feet with strips of caribou hide, and without supper or ceremony thrust us

into the smoky shelter of a lodge. One mask-faced, paint-daubed buck kept us company, squatting impassively on his haunches, moving only when he reached out to put a fresh stick on the fire that smoldered in the center of the lodge.

Physically, we were not so badly off. Hungry we were, and it is no light thing to be tied hard and fast, but we lay on a soft robe, and we were warm; which last, God knows, is something to be thankful for, when one travels the frost-bound miles that lie under the cold glint of the Great Bear. If we could have put away the memory of that afternoon, and given over wondering what the morrow held for us, we could have been fairly comfortable.

I'm no mind-reader, so I can't tell you what thoughts were chasing through Dick's wakeful brain; but mine—well, mine were a queer jumble of sorrow and anger, a potpourri of past joys and mischances. It couldn't well be otherwise, you know; any man is apt to work the high-speed lever on his think-machinery when he imagines he's about to the end of his rope. And Jean Holliday's laughing face rising up before me every so often, whether I would or no, didn't help my mood any. Ah, well, it doesn't matter much what I thought—it isn't so much what a man thinks as what he says and *does* that will make or mar him in this little old world.

There must have been a council, a tribal confab of some sort after the raiding-party had eaten. For a long time we lay there listening to voices of every imaginable key, with a vigorous chorus of yelping and tom-toms. When the powwow ceased we slept in cat-naps the remainder of the long night, our tired bodies clamoring for rest, despite our parlous plight and the cramping tightness of our bonds.

We were awake and whispering encouragement to each other when an Indian poked his ugly mug into the lodge. He carried a steaming pot, which he set by the fire, and grunted some guttural sentence to our guard. That individual arose, stretched himself, and in a leisurely manner untied the strips of

hide that bound our stiffened limbs. Then he stepped back and motioned us to eat. You may be sure we needed no second bidding. We were little short of ravenous, though we hardly realized our hunger until our teeth closed on the meat. It was venison of some kind; clean, savory stuff that gave us a fresh grip on life. When we had finished, our guard threw open the lodge-flap and signified that we should pass out.

Grouped about a crackling fire a short distance from the lodge, and flanked by their savage satellites, the Ape and François awaited us. At the feet of François lay two pairs of snow-shoes and a little bundle no bigger than a man's fist.

"Good morneeng, good morneeng, m'sieus," François addressed us mockingly. "Ah hope you sleep well las' night. Eh, w'at! Ah got som' leetle news for you dees morneeng, m'sieus. W'at ees de good Book say: 'One eye for one eye,' ees eet not? Dat ees de law of de beeg woods. You lak for keel me an' ma pa'tner one tam' een Edmonton; nex' t'ing you come up here an' hunt an' shoot de caribou on de place w'at belong to ma fren's de Eenjun. You call dat fair, eh? You mak' de Eenjun ver' much mad. So much mad dat dey start out for keel you all. But François an' hees fren' dey say: 'No fair, dat. Dem fellers she don't know better. Better for chase dem away.' But de Eenjun she's mad an' keel de guide cause she's s'pose for know better dan to come here; an' dey have to keel de long tenderfeet 'cause he fight so dam' hard.

"So at de council las' night de Eenjun she's lis'n w'en François mak' talk for let you go. But dem Eenjun she's mighty mad 'bout dees t'ing, so she say, we play a leetle game, an' eef de w'ite man hees got plenty nerve, lak' Eenjun, maybeso she ween; eef not——" François spread his palms in a gesture of mock pity. He was posing, and we knew it, and the knowledge did not tend to comfort us or raise our hopes. He went on directly, pointing to the snow-shoes: "De Eenjun she's geeve you dees—an' some odder t'ing for start

wit'. Maybeso you mak' Fort Res'lution—she only 'bout two-honder-feefty mile. So put on de snow-shoe an' go queekly, m'sieus, before de Eenjun she change her mind. An' remember dees ees jus' one leetle game!"

François broke off with a crafty grin, for which I longed to ram one of the snow-shoes down his devilish throat. Two hundred and fifty miles—without grub or guns! We needed no woodsman to tell us that short of a miracle those trackless snows would be our shroud. It was a game, and one we had no choice but to play. But—there might be a chance for us if we kept our heads and played it to the bitter end. And so we tramped silently out of the Indian camp in the cold gray dawn, a mocking "*Bon voyage, m'sieus,*" following us over the crackling snow.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAN-TRACKS IN THE SNOW.

When we had put a half-mile between ourselves and the Ape's vicinity, and the intervening timber precluded the possibility of a bullet in the back—a contingency which I freely admit oppressed me considerably the first three hundred yards—we stopped to take breath and size up our resources. Dick laughed mirthlessly when we opened the package. Our despoilers had furnished us exactly two dozen matches, one small tin cup, and about two ounces of coarse salt! Oh, the fiends! Right there I had a taste of what a criminal must feel when he steps up on the scaffold and the hangman tucks the black cap about his ears.

"The irony of the thing! By the Lord! I've half a mind to turn back and have it out with them right now," snapped Dick. "We're in a devil of a boat, Tommy. How are we ever going to get anywhere with *this*? I don't even know where Fort Resolution is, at this stage of the game."

"Never mind," I consoled. "We can work back to the lake and follow the shore, the way we came down; we

know the lake lies somewhere to the west of us. The main thing now is to scheme some way of getting food."

"Maybe we can sneak up on a rabbit occasionally, and knock him over with a stick," Dick hopefully suggested. "You know a fellow can often get within a few feet of them. But the first thing I'd like to do is to go back to where they nailed us. Somehow I can't bear to think of those poor devils lying there like butchered cattle. That haunted me all night. Let's follow the trail that far, anyway. We can hoist them up in a tree or cover them up with something, and if we get out we'll come back and give them decent burial. If we don't get out—why, we'll have done that much. They'd do the same for us."

I agreed with Dick, for the same thing was in my mind. When one has eaten and slept with a man, and he is a man, it goes against the grain to know that his bones may never find a resting-place. It used to be one of my private theories, before I came face to face with such things, that when the spirit that moves and gives one being has fled it doesn't much matter what becomes of the useless shell. But when it comes to a show-down, six feet by three is the common heritage of all men, and instinct will tell you that the last, least service you can do for the dead is to lay them reverently away in the same dust from whence all the nations of the earth have sprung. "Dust to dust" is part of a white man's faith, whether he owns it or not.

We divided the matches, storing them carefully away like the precious things they were, and went on, after breaking two dead limbs from a nearby tree. We were men set back ten thousand years in history, matching our cunning and bare hands against the wild things of the forest, a club our only weapon, and all about us the implacable, hostile North; so it behooved us, since the stake was our lives, to lose no chance of gaining a meal. But the rabbits, as if they sensed our need, hopped warily beyond throwing-distance, and after wasting our strength in

fruitless efforts, we flung away the sticks in disgust and followed the trail unswervingly.

Ordinarily, I don't believe I'd be classed as a profane man, but I shattered the third commandment to infinitesimal fragments when a bunch of caribou—meat that would have fed us two for a year—trotted out into a little open glade, stopped, stared inquisitively until we were within fifty yards, then snorted and went their way at a leisurely trot.

The sun climbed above the tree tops, and shortly hid its glittering, heatless face behind a bank of clouds. A little later snow began to fall; big, scattered flakes, fluttering like tufts of down, for there was no breath of wind. But the cold—*ugh!* It was intense, biting; the sort of cold that grips like a monster icy hand; cold that burned up vitality as a forced draft consumes fuel.

A careless cotton-tail hopped from behind a tree and sat up on his tail to take stock of us, wondering, perhaps, what manner of strange beast we were, to stalk over the snow on our hind legs. His curiosity was our salvation. Dick plucked the snow-shoe from his foot and let drive, catching the long-eared midget fair in the ribs. Never did the Israelites fall upon Heaven-sent manna with half the joy and thankfulness that was ours when we swooped down on that lone rabbit. It meant a meal, and a meal meant much to us. We could cope with the silent, ominous woods and the long, white miles and the bitter, life-sapping cold—but not without food. We regarded our rabbit with pride, and took fresh hope: what we had once done we could do again.

The snow was steadily falling, and we began to fear that it might cover the tracks so that we could not locate the place we sought, so we pushed on, planning to find and dispose of the bodies before cooking our rabbit. Besides, even with good luck, we had no more than enough matches to build one fire a day.

The sun was hidden, and we had no way of telling time, but it must have been mid-afternoon when we came to the gully edge where the Ape and his

plundering band had fallen upon us. Though a good deal of fresh snow blanketed the spot, we could distinguish the trampled places that marked the point of attack. But there were no bodies, no sign that murder had been done; nothing but the dim, trodden snow, and a few outlying, half-obliterated tracks.

"The Indians must have come back and moved them away," Dick hazarded. "But I don't see why they'd do that, either. Those devils haven't any qualms of conscience about such things, as a rule. They wouldn't take the trouble to bury a white man they'd killed."

An hour or more we spent in useless search, even scrambling into the deep gully bottom in the vain hope of finding them there, perhaps thrown down to keep Buck company and be washed away by the spring floods. Then we gave up and plunged into the somber woods, bearing toward the lake. We had done our best for the dead, and our own problems returned to harass us.

A moody pair were we who gathered dry wood and built a roaring fire in the lee of a cut-bank when darkness fell. We couldn't live forever on one small rabbit, and all that afternoon such small game as we could hope to slay by the primitive method of a thrown stick had defied our efforts, surveying us impotent man-things from a safe distance. We ate rabbit toasted piecemeal on twig-ends, and speculated on the meager chances for breakfast.

With the hunger-ache dulled, though not wholly banished, and a brisk fire to warm us, it was not so bad. The heat soon dried the earth from which we had toilsomely cleared the snow, and the high bank shut off the nipping wind that purred among the trees. With a goodly pile of dead limbs stacked by to replenish the fire, we collected a double armful of spruce boughs for a bed, and Dick lay down to sleep. By turns we slept and fed the fire throughout the long night.

When dawn came the sky was clear, a hard blue dome; and the first red heralds of the laggard sun brought to us new hope and a fortuitous beginning

of the day. I was gathering a last few sticks for the fire, when a rabbit bounded out of his nest in the snow almost at my feet. Without conscious aim I let fly a stick, and by accident or the mercy of Providence, I got him. He was a big fellow, and fat, so we had a tolerable breakfast, and set forth in as good spirits as men in our hapless state could be expected to have.

As I said before, we bent our steps in the direction we judged Slave Lake to be. To reach the lake and follow the eastern shore until we came to the mouth of Slave River and thus to Fort Resolution was our only feasible plan. While we could undoubtedly cut off many miles by an air-flight through the woods, there was always the danger of losing all sense of direction when the sun failed to shine; and we had no great store of strength to be wasted in bootless wandering. Once on the lake shore it depended only on our endurance and the question of food whether we won to safety. A pleasant outlook, wasn't it?

About noon that day, it was, when we came upon the man-tracks; a single trail that led without deviation almost parallel to our own. We brought up short, eying the footprints eagerly.

"What do you make of it, Dick?" I asked. "Indian or white man? See, he hasn't any snow-shoes. It might be worth while to follow. The trail is fresh; you know it snowed till long after dark last night."

"If I were a woodsman such as you read about in novels," Dick returned, "I could tell you that fellow's height, weight, age, nationality, and business. But, unfortunately, I'm in the same fix as you, Tommy. I can see that there's a fresh track in the snow, and that's all. We won't be going out of our way to follow his trail, though, and maybe—maybe——"

We took up the trail without hesitation. An hour later we came to where the unknown had seated himself upon a fallen tree. A bit of torn cloth lay in the snow near-by. It had been white once, but now it was a dull red, soaked with blood and frozen stiff. Dick and I looked at each other, and followed the

trail without a word. But—we were thinking.

It grew dusk. Apparently we were no nearer the man we followed than when we first came upon his trail. We had been unable to kill another rabbit, and when in the twilight we stumbled on a little grove of service-berry bushes, with a few dozen clusters of berries ripened and dried upon their stems, we camped for the night. The berries were good—at least, they were filling, and it was vitally important that we should be filled.

We gathered a little pile of wood and bark. I was down on my knees building a tiny nest of twigs and crushed bark to house the budding flame, so that I would use no more than one of the sulfur-tipped splinters that might mean life or death to us before our journey was done, when Dick called to me from where he was breaking limbs from a dead tree-trunk.

"Tommy, there's a camp-fire down here; I can see it plain," he cried.

I sprang to my feet and joined him on the little hill. Sure enough a yellow glare flickered among the trees. The distance was short—one can't see a fire in the woods very far, you know, even at night.

"Do you suppose——" I began, and broke off. It seemed childish to hope that men we had seen die two short days before could be alive and building fires to light us through those lonesome woods. Yet the idea that we were on the track of one of our friends had run persistently in my mind all afternoon. "Let's go and see who it is," I proposed desperately. "We won't be much worse off if we do bump into the enemy again."

"Come on, then," said Dick, "we've nothing to lose but our scalps—and I'm about ready to sell mine dirt cheap."

It was not far to the fire. As we drew near we could distinguish the shadow of a man stooping over the blaze. When we were well up to the circle of light the soft *pluff, pluff* of our webbed shoes in the crisp, new-fallen snow must have betrayed our approach to his keen ears, for he threw up his

head like a startled deer and in one bound was gone from our sight among the close-ranged trees.

"Hey, there! Hold on a minute!" I yelled, but there was no answer. Nor did any sound come to our hearing except the crackle of the glowing fire, though we listened closely for some time.

"Darn this land of mystery!" I said. "If two more harmless mortals than you and I ever drove a man away from his camp-fire, I'd like to know when it happened."

"Let him go to the devil if he wants to," Dick muttered recklessly. "We'll take possession of the fire. If he doesn't like our presence he can object in person. I wonder if he's got anything to eat."

It doesn't take long for hunger and hardship to strip civilized influences from a man; he can go back several generations toward savagery in a single night, sometimes. Normally we'd have hesitated to boldly stalk into any man's camp and help ourselves to what we could find, but when we looked closely and discovered a brace of skinned rabbits by that cheery fire we pounced on them as if they were ours by right—and I think that had there been need we would have fought like cornered wolves to keep what we had found. I know that we were satisfied the camper was none of our party—or he would never have fled from us—and for the rest, we had food and a fire, and were recklessly willing to take chances on what might follow.

"Rummy go, this, isn't it, Tommy?" Dick smiled, between great bites off a hind leg.

"Rather," I rejoined, spearing a fresh piece from where I'd laid it to cook on a little bed of red coals. "I wonder why that fellow skipped out when he saw us. Maybe he——"

We looked up at a crunching step in the snow, and a man's tall figure loomed up in the yellow glare. Another step, and we could see his face. It was Howe. Howe, the gay conqueror of fashion-plate society, a bloody bandage round his head, staring darkly at us across

a camp-fire in the great North Woods. And when we spoke to him joyfully, calling him by name, he answered our greeting with an uncomprehending glare.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DISEMBODIED VOICE.

"Howe!" I cried. "For the love of God, say something. Don't you know us—Dick and Tommy?"

"You needn't yell at me like that," he answered, glowering sullenly. "I'm not hard of hearing. You may be Dick and Tommy, or Harry and Joe, for all I know. But what I want to know is, what d'ye want around here, anyway?"

I was too stunned to reply; it was so unreal, so unlike Howe. But Dick grasped the situation, and stepped into the breach, as the novel writers say. He always was tolerably quick-witted, and he took the right cue. Howe's attitude was anything but cordial; in fact, he was suspicion personified.

"We want to get in on this big fire of yours, more than anything else, if you don't mind," said Dick. "Lord, but it's frosty weather! I wish we had a flying-machine, so we could get out of this blasted country in a hurry. We ran into some pretty hard citizens the other day, and they left us strapped, to starve or freeze as it might happen. That's how we came to swoop in here and gobble up your rabbits. I wouldn't be surprised to find the same thing had been your experience, now?"

Howe crouched down and held his hands out to the fire. "You did look pretty well froze, for a fact," he said; in a different tone, passing up Dick's question altogether. "I was watching you when you got in here. And you say you haven't got any grub?"

I held out the tin cup and the little parcel of salt. "That and a few matches is the size of our pile," I told him bitterly. "Oh, we're well-heeled for a deep-snow trail!"

That seemed to strike him as a grim joke, for he smiled faintly. At first glance I should have said that he was in worse case than we. His face was

terribly marred from the clubbed guns and the aftermath of frost-bite in the raw places. Sitting there on his haunches, with the flickering red blaze lighting up his battered features and the blood-stained coat-lining wrapped round his head, he might have passed for some ancient pirate, fresh from a bloody boarding-fray. And he had all the nerve and the resource of those old-time buccaneers. Sounds far-fetched, doesn't it? But it's so. The big Northland, unpeopled, inhospitable, barren of all the comforts that had been his from birth, had no terrors for him, alone and unarmed as he was; he feared neither starvation nor the deep snows. The poise of him and his curt speech betokened a man who would jest with fate to his last breath.

"You're fools," he flung out gruffly, "and greenies, too, or you wouldn't be hoofing it in this country without grub or guns. Oh, well, you'll learn. Skip out from some H. B. C. post, did you?"

"Heavens, no!" I cried, and would have said more, but he interrupted, reaching around the fire after a piece of the rabbit I had been eating.

"It's your own business," he grunted. "I don't care a shilling where you come from. Even fools must be fed, when they come hungry to a man's camp. A bit of that salt'll taste good to me; I've lived on meat straight for a dog's age."

He fished out his pocket-knife, which the plunderers must have overlooked in their search of him, and sharpened two little sticks for us and one for himself. We toasted bits of rabbit, eating silently, puzzling over the metamorphosis of our chum. He sat opposite, taciturn; saying little, but keenly alert. He was watchful without appearing so; without obtrusive staring he noted our every move. It was as if he had become an integral part of the wild, with all its soft, sure movement and its patient cunning.

Once he held up his hand, cutting Dick short in the middle of a sentence. We could hear nothing, though the memory of past events made us sensitive to sounds, so that we would start involuntarily at the snap of a twig or

the soft thud of snow falling over an overloaded branch; but Howe listened a moment, then got up and slipped noiselessly into the brush. He was back in a minute with a rabbit, still kicking.

"How do you manage it?" Dick's astonishment was obvious.

Howe cast upon us a look of tolerant pity. "Snare 'em, of course," he said. "Did you think"—sarcastically—"I run them down?"

He showed us, then, a simple little expedient that nearly every schoolboy knows, but which we, alas! had forgotten. A bit of twine reeved into a running noose, the loop end deftly spread on a runway and the other tied to a down-sprung limb. Nine times out of ten a rabbit scuttling along the narrow path beaten by his fellows would catch his head in the loop, his struggles would free the bent limb, and bunny would dangle helplessly in the air.

Howe had a few odd pieces of string in his pockets—not five cents' worth of common cord—and yet, if he was so minded he could capture a dozen rabbits in a single night. I listened to him explain how to lay the snare, and marvelled at his new-found woodcraft.

"D'ye know," he began abruptly, after a time of staring at the fire, "just where we are?"

"I think we're a few miles east of Slave Lake," I replied, wondering what he was driving at, "and about two hundred and fifty miles north of the mouth of Slave River."

Howe looked at me a moment, a startled look in his bloodshot eyes. "Slave Lake!" he muttered incredulously. "No, no, that can't be!"

"It is right," I asserted stubbornly, hoping to stir his dormant recollection. "We crossed Slave Lake at The Neck not a week ago. We haven't had time to get far from the east shore. You know where The Neck is, don't you?" I asked insinuatingly, but he gave no heed to my question.

For a minute or two he seemed to be studying deeply, making little diagrams with a bit of stick in the ashes about the fire.

"I'm not quite lost," he declared hes-

itatingly, "but I'm away out in my reckoning. Now, I thought I was in the Peace River country, somewhere to the north of St. Anne's, and I can't figure out how the blue blazes I got here. There's something the matter with my head; I don't seem to get things right. If I could get a whack at the dirty scut that put me in this shape, I'd—well never mind. Slave Lake, you say?"

St. Anne's! That name sounded familiar. Ah—now I had it! I remembered the story Howe had told me on the river-bank at Edmonton, of his grandfather's wanderings in the North, sixty years before. But how—well, I gave it up. It was incomprehensible. Personalities don't shuffle themselves about to suit the need.

We ceased trying to impress upon him that we were his friends, that we had ever met before. It seemed to anger him, and rouse suspicion of us. His mind was a blank, so far as everything up to and including our trip from Seattle to the musk-ox country was concerned. Somehow, he had slipped the leash of his identity, and if he was groping after it he gave no sign.

How he'd managed to adjust himself to his environment is not for me to say, but he appeared to accept his present position as perfectly natural—as if he had faced the wilderness before, snaring rabbits with a string, and building fires in the manner of a hundred years ago; striking a spark from the back of his knife-blade with a flinty piece of stone—he had no matches.

It was some time before he spoke again; not till Dick had unfolded our plans.

"You see," Dick finished, "our only show is to make Fort Resolution. We can't live out here without grub or shelter, and if one of us should freeze a hand or foot, why, that would be the last of him."

"Fort Resolution, eh?" he nodded reflectively. "Yes, I've heard of it, from traders or somebody. And it's away to the south of here—it beats me, it beats me! We might as well strike for there. The company drives a hard bargain, but they'll always feed a hungry

man. If I had an ax and a gun, I could live like a fighting-cock in the woods; but you fellows—well, you're a helpless lot!" he broke off explosively.

"We are, when we get down to nothing but our hands," Dick agreed, to humor him. "But you can gamble all your spare pennies that if we get out of this deep-snow country once, we won't be in a hurry to come back."

"Well, it's no trick to get out," Howe grunted. "Just a matter of traveling. We'll tackle it together, if you say so."

We agreed to that heartily enough, you may be sure. It was what we had been fishing for, and feared to propose lest he take it amiss. Howe's brain had taken a queer turn, and we dared not risk antagonizing him. Having found him alive, we meant to stay by him, and it would have been mighty awkward if he had taken a notion to quit us and go it single-handed. We would have had a pretty peck of trouble, for he was big and a hard fighter, armed with a keen-edged jack-knife, and full of a new, acute cunning.

On the strength of our compact of trail-friendship I got him to let me look at his head, and the gashes I found there fairly gave me the creeps. How he managed to travel is beyond me. His scalp in half a dozen places was laid open to the bone, and across his face was a long gash stretching from above one eye to below his cheek-bone. I melted some snow in the tin cup and washed clean the cuts and bruises as best I could, and tore off a piece of my shirt to bandage his head afresh.

When I'd finished my clumsy ministrations he showed us how to build a wind-break of brush, banked on the outside with snow, on three sides of the fire. It turned what little wind there was, and the brush caught and held a bit of the heat. He ordered us about emphatically, and sometimes profanely, so that when it was done, and he commanded us to lie down and sleep while he stood first "watch," as he phrased it, we obeyed without a murmur.

It wasn't exactly to be compared to a hair mattress and a dozen pair of blankets for either warmth or softness,

that bed of spruce boughs, but I managed to get a fair amount of sleep. When the side of me that was away from the fire grew unbearably cold I would wake up, turn over, and drop off again. I was dead to the world, dreaming of luxuriously furnished apartments, steam heat, and all the comforts of home, when Howe wakened me with a light touch on my shoulder. He pointed to the Big Dipper, swinging on its eternal circle in the star-flecked sky, just above the gorgeous Northern Lights.

"Lookée," he said briefly, "when the handle points down and a little to the east, you call the other fellow." Then he stretched himself in the place I had vacated, and in two minutes was sound asleep. His had not been an idle watch I shortly discovered. Four cotton-tails hung stark from a near-by limb.

Long before sunrise we breakfasted, and when the first glimmer of daybreak dulled the stars we set out, with enough meat for our dinner slung upon our backs. Howe took the lead as if it was his natural right, pointing southwest to strike the lake shore on an angle. When I saw that he was bound to break trail I gave him my snow-shoes, and thereafter we proceeded Indian file, stepping each in the track of the other.

It must have been killing work for Howe the two days he stalked through the woods alone, for a man in moccasins would sink to the knees in the dry, saltlike snow that blanketed the land. For me it was not so bad; two pairs of snow-shoes tramping before packed the white quicksand down so that it was fairly good footing in the rear, but I was tired enough when the weary day drew to a close, and we began to keep lookout for a good place to camp.

When we did at last come to a likely looking spot, Dick and I set about wood-getting, while Howe built a fire—a task he performed with ease in about half the time it would have taken me. He had picked for our stopping-place a great snow-bank, lying in a narrow, treeless depression that ran east and west; a broad, white path through the

forest. With our webbed shoes we dug to earth-level in snow that had drifted and settled till it was firm enough to bear the weight of a heavy man, scooping out a circular hole nearly five feet deep. Into this we transferred our fire and covered the floor with a thick layer of spruce boughs; and when it was done we had a house, lacking only the roof.

It was Howe's idea, wherever he got it, and it was a good one, for it held the heat and shut off an insidious night breeze that cut through our clothing and chilled the very marrow in our bones. We had each got a *parka*—a sort of shirt garment, fur-lined, made to slip on over the head, and with a hood attached—at Fort Resolution, on our way north. But for those, I think we'd have frozen stiff. Cloth is unavailing; it takes buckskin and fur to turn that Northland cold.

We'd fixed things the best we could for the night. Howe had set his snares in the brush close at hand, and sternly enjoined silence upon us, that the rabbits pattering along their runways might not take alarm at the sound of voices and hie them to a more secluded spot. His caution was duly observed, for we had no mind to scare away our supper, and in an incredibly short time our stillness was rewarded by a long-eared prize.

Before we'd finished him, another came our way, and in a little while we were basking in the cheery fire-glow, our hunger appeased, so far forgetting the direness of our strait as to tell each other that the world would actually look bright if we only had tobacco. Howe sat humped up, his hands clasped over his knees, thinking—the Lord knows what.

"Oh, there. *O-o-oh*, there, Seattle!"

We jumped to our feet at that strange call, and in the dead, cold hush I could hear my heart pound savagely against my ribs. "Seattle" was the name Buck had always called me in his quaint, unconventional way. But that could not be Buck speaking. Yet it had come unmistakably distinct; a toneless, disembodied voice, bubbling eerily out of the drifted snow.

Howe craned his head forward, straining every nerve to hear. Back of us the dark spruce-trees limned their bushy crests against the flaming Aurora and the spangled blue above; before us spread the glittering, white snow-path, whence the words had seemed to come. In a moment the voice uprose again, as before, toneless and muffled, and so close that involuntarily I shrank back at the ghostly sound. But it was speaking my name, as Buck of old had spoken it, and I mastered the leaven of superstition that was working within me, and hoarsely answered the call.

"Don't talk so blame' loud!" the eerie tones went on. "Sit down and act natural, or we'll all be in the soup again. There may be somebody in that timber watchin' yuh right now, for all I know. Sit down, and I'll crawl into your hole and tell yuh all about. I'm right close—I've burrowed under these snow-drifts like a badger for four hundred yards!"

CHAPTER X.

BUCK TAKES A HAND.

I breathed a lot easier, I can tell you, after those few explanatory words. It was good to know that Buck was alive and near us, though how he'd managed it was a mystery. When you see a man shot, and suppose that he is dead, it's rather startling to hear his voice unexpectedly float out of a snow-bank. I wondered if Jule also had escaped, but felt little hope of that; he'd fallen near me, and I'd seen too plainly. There's no chance to mistake the gray look that comes over a man's face when he has topped the big divide.

Of course Buck's stealthy approach and his warning to us were Greek to Howe, in his unaccountable state of mind, and I caught him eying us with an expression of extreme distrust.

"Who was that?" he demanded, when we squatted down as Buck had requested.

"Buck Harrison; one of our friends who we thought had been killed," I hastened to explain. That seemed to

satisfy him. He nodded understandingly, and we fell to listening and watching for Buck to appear.

In a minute or so came a faint scuffling. Shortly a mittened hand was thrust through the snow-wall, and Buck's face, wet and glistening, followed after. Puffing, he crawled from the mouth of the burrow and grinned cheerfully at us three.

"Sufferin' cats, old feller!" he whispered, observing Howe's wounded head, "they pretty near put yuh out uh business for keeps, didn't they?"

"They did" Howe answered briefly.

"We'll have to talk mighty low," Buck warned. "It wouldn't be a bad idea for one uh yuh to peek over toward the timber every minute or two. They know where yuh are, and, while I don't suppose they'd bother watchin' yuh nights, it won't hurt to keep your eye peeled. Say, I'm hungry! If you'll stake me to some uh that rabbit yonder, I'll eat while yuh tell me what happened, and how yuh panned out after I fell into the coulée."

Howe handed over the remains of our supper without comment. When I asked about Jule, Buck answered with a gesture that was more expressive than words. While he ate I told him how we'd fared, down to the smallest detail, and his blue eyes snapped at the telling.

"Just a little game, eh?" he growled. "Well, we'll play the little game out with 'em, all right, but we'll stack the cards to suit ourselves from now on."

"Yuh remember I dropped and rolled into that cañon at the first shots. Well, they didn't hit me, which I don't understand. I just naturally ducked, my foot slipped, and I was rollin' down-hill before I knew it, and no way to stop. It's a steep hill and a long one, and there was rocks and tree-roots and things piled along the bottom in the loose snow. I landed on something hard, and for a minute I was plumb knocked out. When I got my senses again and looked up, there was about a dozen buck Injuns standin' on the bank lookin' as if they had half a mind to come down and hold a coroner's in-

quest on the remains. When I sees that I says to myself: it's all off with the rest uh the boys. And I laid mighty still, for I knowed that if they started to pepper me from the bank it was all day with Buck. If they took a notion to come down, I aimed to get *some* uh them—I put my six-shooter and belt on that mornin', yuh remember; and the old gun stayed in the scabbard all the way down that hill, for which I was sure grateful to Providence. But they didn't come; hill was too hard a climb for the lazy devils, I guess. Anyway, I was supposed to be plumb dead.

"I laid there till dusk, and come darned near freezin' to death, for all I was near buried in the snow. Then I gets up the bank and goes to lookin' around for dead men, but I didn't find any but poor old Jule. I figured that they'd taken the rest uh yuh to their camp—but I couldn't *sabe* why they'd do that, either. So I hauled Jule off through the brush till I come to a place where there was some loose rocks, and I covered him up with a lot uh rocks and brush to keep off the wolves. It was moonlight then, and I was pretty near starved, so I takes a long chance on 'em hearin' my gun, and shoots a rabbit for supper. When I'd eaten I makes tracks for the Injun camp, to see if I couldn't do something to square the account. Yuh bet I was sure sore at that bunch uh savages—— Say"—Buck broke off apologetically—"I guess you fellers could stand a smoke, couldn't yuh? I know I'd want one pretty bad. Oh, I'm a lucky cuss, I guess; born lucky, and never got over it. I put a full four-ounce sack uh Durham and a book uh papers in my pocket that mornin'. I've been goin' light on it, too. I plumb forgot about yuh not havin' anything to smoke till just now. Fly at it!"

We did fly 'at it—the phrase fits exactly. And it was certainly good to get a whiff of that blue smoke in our starved nostrils; how good only men in our circumstances can ever know. Many and many an aromatic perfecto I've puffed that didn't bring a tithe of the joy to my soul as did the stuff in

the muslin bag that Buck handed over to us that night. You've got to be ruthlessly deprived of the things that help to make life smooth in order to appreciate their true worth. When we'd rolled and lighted a cigarette apiece, Howe so far relaxed from his stoical attitude as to regard with a pleased smile the smoke that curled from his lips—he'd lost track of his identity, but by all the signs and tokens he hadn't lost his passion for cigarettes. Buck made one himself, and continued his story.

"I got in sight uh their camp that night, but there was nothin' doing. When it began to get light I had to back off, 'cause I dassen't risk 'em seein' me. They started you fellers out when it was pretty gray; that was how it come I missed yuh, and maybe it's just as well. I hung around that day, seein' nothin'. That night I holed up in a coulée and built a fire—pretty risky business, but I had to do it or freeze. Next mornin' they sent out some Injun runners. They begin to come in before noon, and right away the whole outfit picks up their lodges and swings off on a slant toward the lake. I watched them right along. When the Ape and Frenchy strikes out by themselves I follows; and in that way I run onto your trail to-day, and *sabed* where yuh was makin' for.

"I swung away to the south, so they wouldn't be likely to strike *my* trail, and to-night I headed into this draw and got sight uh your camp-fire. I come in by way uh the tunnel for fear some uh them jaspers might be keepin' an eye on yuh. Gee! but it was hot work diggin' through that snow. I sweat like I was performin' at a Fourth uh July dance."

"So they're following us," said Dick. "Why, I wonder?"

"Why?" Buck echoed. "To play their game out, yuh can gamble. D'ye s'pose they aimed to let yuh get anywhere when they turned yuh loose? Not by a jugful! They knew yuh wasn't next to this country, and didn't stand a ghost of a show to get out of it alive with what stuff they give yuh—

that's an Injun's idea of a joke; and them two put 'em up to it, just as sure as I'm sittin' here. If the cold and no grub don't do the trick, they will. They're playin' with yuh, cat-fashion—but yuh watch *me*; I'll spoil the play.

"It's just like this," Buck went on earnestly. "If them fellers knew I was alive and prognosticatin' round here, they'd lay for us and put our light out too quick for anything. They'd probably let yuh go a while, just to hang around and see yuh suffer. They dassen't let yuh get to Resolution now; they've robbed yuh and murdered a good man, and they know blamed well that if it gets out, the Hudson's Bay Company or the government'll get 'em, if they have to foller 'em to the north pole. They feel pretty tolerable sure that yuh can't get very far, and if yuh show signs uh pullin' through they can easy kill yuh off, so they ain't worryin' none. But if they get wise to the fact that I'm alive and buttin' into the game with a gun and a belt full uh cartridges, why, they're goin' to stop us right away, quick. Furthermore, they'll get next before long; I make tracks when I travel, and some one uh that bunch is goin' to see 'em and follow me up.

"So before we go any farther we've got to round up the Ape and his partner, and make a run for it. We could put up a pretty hard fight with the guns them two jaspers carry; and, anyway, I don't think the Injuns would bother us much if them two wasn't around. Now, I'm goin' to take a long chance—and get them before they get us. Their camp is about five miles from here. In the mornin' you stay here till good, plain day, and when yuh start, go slow, like yuh was about all in. I'll leave early and swing back to where I can watch the Injun camp, and if them he-devils follow yuh to see how yuh stack up, why, I'll follow *them*—and whenever they get close to yuh, and I get a show, I'll hold 'em up.

"I never did kill a man," Buck owned. "I've rambled through this Western country ever since I was a kid, among all kinds uh tough people, and, while I've been in trouble more

than once, I've never had to burn powder under a man's nose to make him see things my way. I don't believe in killin' if it can be helped. But I'm mighty handy with a six-gun, just the same, and I'll go through with the play if I have to throw lead into both of 'em. I don't know as I'd lose any sleep over it, but I'd a heap rather see them hung. We can take the dirty skunks to Fort Resolution, and old MacDonough'll do the rest."

Having unfolded his plan, Buck again bade us keep an eye on the timber, and curled himself up on our primitive bed. He had tramped many a mile that day, and slept little the past three nights. He needed clear eyes and steady nerves to pit himself against those two degenerates. There was nothing we could do, unarmed and unskilled in bushwhacking as we were, beyond insuring him a good night's rest without the risk of death by freezing. Either Dick or I would gladly have gone with him, but, as Buck sensibly pointed out, that would only double the danger of discovery, without helping him a particle. Until he held the Ape and his companion under the muzzle of his gun we were only pawns in the game.

Howe listened, but took no part in the conversation. Most of the time, when he wasn't making trips to his rabbit-snares, he sat tinkering with the fire, as though the Athabasca Ape and his hook-nosed partner and our once more getting south of latitude forty-nine were no concern of his. I'd have given a lot to know just what sort of thought-process went on those days within that sadly battered skull.

Of course we did not all sit up to guard Buck's slumbers. All he needed was due warning of any one spying on our camp, so that he could gain the snow-tunnel and escape unseen.

Howe was even more capable of observing any suspicious move than Dick or I—nothing escaped his notice, and nothing, apparently, could alarm him—and when he pointedly told us to lie down so that we could stay awake when it came our turn to stand watch, we

obeyed meekly, more to humor him than because we were drowsy.

I don't think Dick slept much that night; I only dozed. Buck snored comfortably, without ever turning over. So did Howe, after he called me. That was one strong point of resemblance between the two—they had nothing you could call "nerves"; peril sat lightly on their shoulders if they were physically comfortable.

It was natural enough in Buck. He'd grown to manhood among a breed of men whose philosophy of life is simple and direct; men to whom danger in the abstract is a negligible quantity, and Buck had the cool courage that takes desperate chances without hesitation, and a buoyant spirit that refused to be cast down.

But Howe—the Howe of old had a luxury-loving soul, and from childhood no wish of his had gone ungratified. He had courage enough of the high-tempered, reckless kind, but in his life there had been nothing to develop either resource or self-control. And now to see him, with all the past either a blank wall or an unmeaning jumble of scenes, suddenly capable, not only of holding his own with the wild, but of aiding Dick and me, and schooling us in the way of the woods—well, I'm like Buck, I couldn't *sabe* the thing.

Dick got up long before his time. We piled the fire, talking in whispers from then until Buck turned over and blinked up at the stars. He sat up with a prodigious yawn, and dug his knuckles into sleep-heavy eyes.

"Well," he said cheerily, looking at his watch, "accordin' to this turnip uh mine, which regulates the sun, moon, and stars, it's time for me to *vamos*."

Howe wakened at the sound of our voices, and we breakfasted on broiled rabbit. You might think that a steady diet of rabbit-meat would grow monotonous; but it didn't. I can't vouch for the others; personally, I had an ever-present vacuum in the region of my stomach; a vacuum that insistently demanded to be filled with food, any sort of food. My only trouble was a pessimistic conviction—the aftermath of the

first, luckless twenty four hours, I suppose—that the supply of rabbits would cease. I think that the cravings of hunger would have made boiled moccasins palatable those days. So we ate our rabbit meal thankfully—even greedily—and thankfully we rolled a cigarette each for dessert; and when that was done we shook hands with Buck and watched him vanish the way he had come.

When the faint, scuffling noise could no longer be heard in the burrow, Dick looked off in the direction of the Indian camp, and delivered himself of a torrent of language—good, old-fashioned swear words, to which I added a fervent "Amen."

Howe, as was his custom, kept his thoughts to himself; but his brain, or whatever one chose to believe guided his actions, was keenly alert, for he trampled down the snow over the gaping mouth of Buck's burrow, and covered the trodden place with a mass of spruce boughs.

Then we sat down by the fire to wait for dawn and what the dawn might bring.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TURNING OF THE TABLES.

When the sun was well clear of the eastern sky-line we left camp. It was one of those still, stinging mornings, when one's voice rings out through the thin atmosphere like a hammered anvil, and the air was filled with a million dancing atoms of diamond frost. Underfoot, the snow crunched harshly at every step.

We were a wordless trio that morning, plodding mechanically through the unbroken white that flooded the quiet woods. Already the wilderness was beginning to set its mark upon us. We were silent, but not morose; merely patient—the long-suffering patience of animals. Not one of us three but was frost-bitten. Our fingers and toes had paid toll to the North until the skin was black and peeling, and the first mile was an agony. Howe was truly

in fearful shape, yet, despite our protests, he took Dick's snow-shoes and broke trail.

For three hours or more we kept on, seeing nothing, the stillness that hung like a pall over that wooded waste broken only by the monotonous *cr-ek* of our footsteps in the snow. I began to wonder what would be the outcome should Buck fail in his mission. It was an ugly thought; one that made me more than once glance apprehensively over my shoulder. It would be so easy, with Buck eliminated, for the Ape and François to pot us if it seemed that we might make Fort Resolution. I hadn't thought of it in that light before. Of course it would be the height of folly for them to allow us to reach a Hudson's Bay post—or any white man's abiding-place, for that matter—after robbing us, and, as they thought, murdering both our guides. There is law in the North, new and naked as it is—and dead men, etc.

Far in our rear came a sharp crack. Howe whirled about short, and the three of us listened breathlessly, hands cupped behind our ears. If we had not known and been waiting for something of the sort, I might have taken it for the breaking of a frosty, snow-laden limb. But we knew it was a gun, whether the rifle of some hunting Indian or the first note in another tragedy we had yet to learn. For a time we waited moveless, fearful; a waiting fraught with suspense. Then my overstrained nerves could bear no more, and I turned to Howe.

"Let's go back, for Heaven's sake!" I cried. "If Buck has won out, it's all right. If he hasn't, it's only a matter of time till they get us, too. I can't stand here and wait and wait."

"Come on, then," he returned. "I'd like to know—well, never mind. Come on."

We didn't have far to go, after all; not more than half a mile. Two figures appeared, following swiftly our trail, and I barely repressed a yell of pure joy when I recognized Buck, one rifle slung across his square shoulders and another in his hands, driving relentlessly

ly before him our baboon-faced enemy, the Ape.

A moment later they were up to us, the Ape scared and sullen, Buck cool and watchful.

"What of the Frenchman?" I asked, for it seemed hardly possible that the Ape would follow us alone. I was a bit excited, I guess, or I'd have known without being told, that the extra rifle accounted for either the Frenchman or an Indian.

Buck shrugged his shoulders. "He wouldn't stand for a hold-up," he answered, "and so I let him have it. He had it coming to him, anyway. And I want to warn yuh all, right now, not to take any chances with this square-faced critter. If he makes a break, don't stop to see what he's tryin' to do; shoot first and ask all the questions yuh want to afterward."

Buck gave Dick the rifle—which happened to be Howe's pet gun; a .30-30 Savage he had prized above all the others—he had taken from the dead Frenchman. It had fallen to François, I suppose, in the division of plunder. Me he armed with his own six-shooter, and for himself kept the Ape's gun and belt. (Howe showed no desire for a weapon; all his attention was centered on the Ape.) Then he started us on again, trailing far in the rear himself, to guard against surprise by the Indians should they find the body of François and follow our trail.

None followed, however. A little after noon Dick shot a moose, and we halted for dinner, and filled our empty stomachs with the wholesome meat. Our dinner over, we loaded one hind-quarter on the Ape's massive back, and drove him before us like a beast of burden the rest of the day. And, as we plodded, Howe's eyes followed the Ape with a queer, puzzled expression that sharpened at times to a baleful, malignant glare.

At dusk we camped for the night in the heart of a thick-grown grove of spruce. Before our fire was well under way a droning wind crept out of the northeast, where lie the Barren Grounds, and in an hour the crisp,

powdered snow was whirling about the quivering tree tops and settling on the forest floor, as though the banked clouds above were in mad haste to bury us before our time.

"Maybe I ain't glad this old storm is doin' business in slap-bang style!" Buck remarked, when we'd fixed our shelter for the night and were huddling close to a roaring blaze—even the Ape seemed to appreciate the comfort of the fire. "Them Injuns couldn't foller us now if they was ever so anxious for our gore. I don't expect 'em to ever pick up the trail after this. Chances are they wouldn't think about gettin' out to look for their two big chiefs till it was too late. This snow'll bury Frenchy so the wolves couldn't find him, let alone an Injun; and you'll go to Fort Resolution, and the Hudson's Bay Company'll see that yuh decorate the end of a good stout rope, yuh cold-blooded, thievin' murderer"—this last to the Ape.

But he only buried his chin deeper in the fur collar of his coat, and made no reply.

We slept little that night. It was too cold. The wind whistled through the woods with a melancholy whine, and pelted us with steadily, down-driving masses of snow. There was no escape from the combined onslaught; nothing to do but bear it and ply the fire.

That night, the next day, and the following night the storm raged. Forty hours that stick in my memory as a time of slithering snow, of groaning trees, and untampered misery. Crouched over our sputtering fire, we cursed the wilderness whose moods take no account of the pain of man. We raved against the forced inaction; but there was no help for it; a man would only waste his strength, Buck said, wandering in such a blizzard.

Till the storm broke we dozed fitfully, rustled wood by turns, and kept close watch on our prisoner. The rabbits snuggled away in their snow-burrows, beyond reach of snare or gun; only the quarter of moose-meat kept life in our bodies and hope in our souls. I can tell you that I was frankly glad

when it was over and we were ready to hit the trail. The storm hadn't all to do with it. It was partly Howe—the last night of that long camp he got thoroughly on my nerves.

It wasn't so bad the first day or so that Dick and I were with him. He would talk then, more or less, and, though his speech wasn't altogether rational at times, he seemed cheerful enough for a man who could neither remember who he was nor where he came from.

But with the Ape's advent Howe relapsed into sullen brooding. He refused to talk, answering questions in a growl, or not at all. For hours on end, during that frolic of the elements, he sat staring at the Ape, and I noticed more than once, when the baboon-faced one made a quick move, his hand slip suggestively to the pocket where rested his knife.

It got on the Ape's nerves as well as mine, that steady questioning of Howe's gray eyes. I think that, as much as anything he expected at the hands of justice, put the chill of fear into the Ape's hardened soul. The Ape was no coward—I'll give the devil his due—but the cold malevolence of Howe's manner was enough to make any one's back-bone buckle. It was a relief to get on the trail again, if only to be rid of the sight of a man glaring premeditated murder across the fluttering blaze, and the other squirming under the look.

The next march brought us to the white, glittering reaches of Slave Lake, and on its forbidding shore came our first trouble with Howe.

We were breaking twigs for kindling, and for just a moment relaxed our vigilant watch of the Ape. I don't know what he did; none of us knew, for that matter. It happened to be an instant when our attention had wandered.

As I broke a dry willow across my knee, there mingled with the snap of it a sound that was part bellow and part snarl, and when I turned, the Ape was kicking in the snow, and over him stood Howe, a look of unholy joy on his face, and in his hands an unwieldy

billet of wood that one of us had rustled from the beach. He swung it back, and, if he'd got a fair blow, he'd have mashed the Ape's head flat, but Buck nailed one arm and I the other, and between us we stopped the blow.

Howe made no explanation of his attack. When we released him he coolly set about helping Dick build a fire and fix a wind-break, as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. The Ape was clean knocked out; it took a good deal of snow, vigorously applied to his temples, to rouse him, and when he did become conscious, he was fairly gibbering with fear and helpless wrath.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRICE OF A MINUTE'S SLEEP.

From that time on a terror of Howe's presence took possession of the Ape. Though he spoke only in the curtest of monosyllables, his way of fixedly regarding the Ape meant volumes. It may have been that Howe's muddled brain retained some slight impression of a previous encounter; a misty recollection of the Ape's repulsive face. At any rate, it was patent to us all that he only lacked an opportunity to send the renegade Ape out the same bloody trail that poor Jule had taken with such scant warning.

Even Buck, nervy as he was, viewed with apprehension the cold-blooded malice of Howe; it was no part of our plan to *murder* the red-handed monster, richly as he deserved it; nor did we desire that Howe should enact the part of executioner. And far more than the cruel hardships that were our daily lot, far more than the law of the North, before which he knew we meant that he should answer for his crimes, did the Ape fear the silent man whose burning eyes were fixed steadily upon him throughout his waking hours.

Day by day we forged to the south, a single file of desperate, fast-weakening men, trail-weary and bitten deep by the frost. On our left loomed high the tree-crowned banks that lined the east shore, under the sheltering heights of

which we camped those dreary nights; and for seventy miles to our right stretched the scintillating levels of the ice-bound lake. Day by day, as we tramped that glittering blanket of white, the sun-dogs leered down upon our weakness, mocking our struggle with the strength-sapping miles.

It is a land of strange sights, the North. By night the dancing flare of the Aurora dimmed the stars; above the pole it spread its sinuous length, a banner of colored flame flung across the sky and rippled by the breath of the gods. And at dawn the sun—a glistening mockery of a sun that brought no warmth to our bodies and little cheer to our hearts—would mount above the tree tops for its short journey, flanked by circles and crescents and cross-bars of hard light that outdid the sun itself in brilliancy. Those were sun-dogs, Buck told me, and while they followed the sun there would be no abatement of the cold.

Nor was there any break in that nightmare of crisp, saltlike snow underfoot and floating diamond-frost in the air about us, and bitter, bitter cold tugging at our heart-strings, in the twenty-odd days of our passage through the wilderness; in each of us the vital spark flickered fainter as the days wore on.

Came a day when Howe's great heart failed him. The blood he had lost had weakened his iron frame, and his wounded head aggravated the drain. Only his nerve had carried him so far, and sheer will-power can't keep a man on his feet forever if the stream of life is near exhausted. He sank unconscious in the snow, and the frosts of the North came near claiming another victim before we could get him to where was dry wood to build a fire. But we chafed faithfully his hands and breast, and kept his weak pulse fluttering, and by the heat of the snapping blaze he soon revived.

"Well," he grunted, "I guess I've gone as far as I'm going."

"Aw, shucks!" Buck retorted. "What's the use uh yuh talkin' like that? You're goin' all the way, same as the rest of us. Brace up! It's only another

day—two at the most. Why, we'll carry yuh in on our backs, if we have to."

Howe passed up Buck's cheerful prophecy as if it were of little moment, and focused his somber gaze on the Ape.

"You infernal monstrosity," he coolly said. "I don't exactly know why I hate the sight of you, but I do. I'd lay 'em down cheerful, right here in the snow, if I could cut a hole in the ice and shove you through first."

It was the lengthiest speech he had uttered in a week, and when it was done he fell to staring into the heart of the fire. Buck, close beside him, also dropped into a brown study.

"I've got the idea," he suddenly exclaimed. "I'll fix a *travois*—ever see one?—and we'll make this big stiff that's caused all the trouble haul him. He can't make it afoot, that's a cinch. Yuh can see he's about all in."

Buck set us to haggling off saplings—a stupendous contract for us, even with the skinning-knife mulcted from the Ape at the time of his capture—and took up his rifle and plunged into the woods. He needed a hide to make a *travois*, he explained.

He was back in a couple of hours with a hide, and a saddle of caribou-meat on his back. The green hide he lashed on two poles in such a manner that it formed a sort of chairlike seat. Another shorter stick he put on as a cross-bar, to keep Howe's weight from drawing the long poles together. When done, it was a simple enough arrangement; like a litter, one end resting on the broad shoulders of the Ape and the other trailing in the snow.

The Ape came near balking outright when he sensed the *modus operandi*, and, contrariwise, Howe was pleased—as if he enjoyed being a burden on his enemy. Not that he said anything of the sort, but from the expression on his face when Buck ordered the Ape to pick up the *travois* end.

The Ape sullenly refused, more, I think, through dread of having Howe so perilously close behind than for any other reason. Buck merely clicked back

the hammer of his gun with ominous deliberation, and the Ape bent to his task with a groan. The rest of that day Howe literally rode on the Ape's back, save for such times as he was forced to walk for fear of freezing.

When dark overtook us that evening we were in the shadow of a sloping bank that ran down to the lake shore, bare of shelter or wood. So we were forced to climb toilsomely to the timbered crest to make our camp.

We made a good supper off the caribou loin, and huddled about the welcome fire in better spirits than we had boasted for many days; for just before sundown Buck had pointed south to where a wide-mouthed valley, barely visible in the waning light, opened into the lake.

"See yonder! The post sits up in that big draw. Yuh can buckle your belts a hole tighter and step out brisk in the mornin'," he cheerfully informed us. "If we make good time to-morrow we can sleep at Resolution—in good wool blankets, and with a roof over our heads. Holy smoke! Won't hot coffee and real tobacco taste good once more. I'd sure give a heap for a smoke right now."

Perhaps because we were nearing our goal and felt less the need of vigilance; perhaps it was the natural outcome of pure physical weakness—even Buck's tanned face was pinched and drawn, and his step laggard, those last days, and Dick and I were wan replicas of the careless hunters who had paddled gaily down the Peace in the drowsy Indian summer—but we sat blinking around that fire, and one by one fell fast asleep, our hands clasped over our guns, our tired heads sunk forward on our breasts; so sat Buck and Dick when I wakened with a start. And we three had the fire to ourselves—Howe and the Ape were gone.

I wakened the others with a violent hand. Dick stared about him in sleepy bewilderment, but Buck comprehended at a glance. Beyond the halo cast by the red embers, gun in hand and muttering angrily, he circled the camp till he came upon their trail—a double

track, plain as print in the misty sheen cast upon the snow by the glowing Northern Lights and a host of cold, winking stars. The trend of it was toward the lake.

At the top of the steep slope that fell away to the boulder-strewn beach he halted for an instant. One track turned from the brink, back to the north in the shadows cast by a fringe of nodding spruce; the other—there was no other track, only from the little patch of blurred footprints ran a shallow groove through the drifts, down, down below.

Buck pointed significantly to a black splotch in the white at the foot of the hill; then he dropped flat and slid tobogganwise to the bottom, and we, with forebodings of tragedy, followed closely after.

He lay in an ugly heap where bank and beach met, and in the misty light we could not be sure which it was till we turned his face up to the stars. It was Howe, and, with the bandages freshly torn and the old wounds bruised anew, he was not a pretty sight to see; but he moaned and moved feebly when we lifted him up; he was alive, and for that we gave heartfelt thanks—even while we remembered that the Ape was abroad to plan new deviltry.

We took him back to the fire and dressed his hurts as best we could, and waited anxiously for day. What took place while we slept we could only guess at. Buck surmised, from the tracks, that the Ape stole away from the fire, and that Howe followed craftily, and leaped upon him at the brow of the hill; and that the Ape, with the strength of desperation, had thrown him over the hill-brow—that much, at least, was written in the snow.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LITTLE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH.

When the eastern horizon grew gray and then streaked with color, we loaded Howe into the *travois*, wrapping his feet and hands in garments we could ill

spare from our own bodies, and went on. I can't tell the details of that last, long tramp, because I was in a daze most of the time. I know that it was cold, and growing colder, as if the North was putting forth its mightiest efforts to break us down on the homestretch. I know that Buck dragged the *travois* with a maniac bound in it; a maniac who cursed and reviled us for thieves and murderers one moment, and in the next breath sang college-songs, and rent the frozen atmosphere with our old gridiron yell.

Behind staggered Dick and I—gaunt, weak, and shaken with fear of the never-ending trail. All day the sun-dogs leered at us from their aerie in the sky; and near night, for the first time in our wanderings, the gray wolves howled menacingly at us from the wooded shelter of the shore. By all the signs and tokens we were nearing the end of the trail, whether it led to Fort Resolution and safety or to a lasting sleep in the deep snows.

The latter part of the day my feet moved mechanically; a curious apathy took possession of my mind. The rack-ing pains that shot through my limbs at each step disappeared, and I would have been fairly comfortable only for the dismal howling of the wolves—and the sight of the sun-dogs overhead; somehow those flashing mock suns gave me the horrors. But there was nothing I could do, save follow the lead of Buck as best I could, though my knees wobbled strangely at times.

Once, near sundown, Dick stumbled and fell in the trail ahead of me. He didn't get up on his feet; just sat up on his haunches in the snow and rested his head in his hands, his body bent forward and swaying slightly.

I spoke to him, but he didn't seem to hear. Buck called back to him, and he paid no attention. Then Buck laid the end of the *travois* down and came back. I suppose he'd seen men lie down on trail before. He didn't waste any time in useless persuasion; he simply kicked Dick in the ribs, and swore at him until Dick got to his feet, and we moved on again.

Thus we forged slowly ahead, and in the starlit evening turned into the mouth of Slave River Valley, and came in sight of Fort Resolution, a dark, bulky shadow in the prevailing white. I may come to many a journey's end before my life is done, but never, though I should live to be twice the age of the oldest inhabitant, will any sight of the dwellings of men bring such joy to my soul as did the first glimpse of that grim stockade.

But even then, within a scant mile of our goal, fate reached out a firm hand, and, taking us by the shoulder, turned our feet away from the path we had chosen. As we rounded a point that jutted into the river, a puff of smoke from a wood-fire greeted our nostrils. Fifty yards farther we came plump upon a cluster of lodges, and a score of yelping Indian dogs sallied out to meet us.

Probably we could have made it to the post, though Buck was near to complete exhaustion from the load he had dragged all day—we couldn't help him; I had scarce strength enough to move my own body, and since noon Dick had stumbled along uncertainly, like a child learning to walk. With food and shelter at hand, such as we hadn't known for weeks, that last mile seemed a long, long way.

The red man has the name of a confirmed stoic, a being to whom fear and love and pity, and suchlike emotions, are either unknown or carefully repressed. Maybe he is that way—take him on the war-path or among people of alien blood. I don't know Indians very well; the raid of the Ape's band had been my first experience with them at close range. But the bunch that crowded around us and listened while Buck made terse explanation in guttural Cree weren't chary of either pity or hospitality.

They got Howe out of the *travois*—he'd sunk into a sort of lethargy, and I believe another hour of exposure would have done for him—and hustled the lot of us into a roomy lodge, turning out a batch of squaws and papooses to make way for us. Oh, but it was

like entering into paradise—no knife-edged wind cutting to the bone; a busy little fire, cracking and waving yellow tongues of flame, burned in the center, filling the double-walled lodge with life-giving warmth; piles of furry robes and soft blankets for a weary man to rest his bones on—if you've never wanted, never suffered for days and days on end, and almost perished for lack of such, you can never know what food and fire and shelter really mean.

They stripped the clothing from Howe; clothing that hadn't left his body for twenty-nine consecutive days and nights (consider it, ye men of pajamas and dressing-gowns and regular morning plunges!), and chafed his limbs till the red blood pulsed afresh. Then they poured a cup of broth down his unwilling throat, rolled him in blankets close by the fire, and let him go to sleep.

To Buck and Dick and me they brought a supper of moose-meat stew, broiled fish, and crisp, hot, baking-powder bread. It was clean and fresh, and bread was a thing of joy. A round-faced squaw carried it in, and watched us with a broad smile while we ate. But even while I stowed away unmerciful quantities of food, physical weariness rose up and overmastered me; the sleep my aching body craved drew my heavy eyelids together, and I blinked drowsily over a cup of steaming tea, spilling the hot stuff on my knees. Hastily I gulped what was left in the cup, and stretched out on a robe, a bear-skin that to my tired body was as a bed of down. The crackle of fresh wood on the fire sounded faint and far away. Some one dropped a blanket over me. Half-consciously I felt the warm weight of it, then everything grew blank; I was dead to the world, and no dreams disturbed my sleep.

When I awakened again the sun was bright on the blackened smoke-vent in the top of the lodge. It took me some moments to adjust myself, and then I sat up, fervently thankful that my waking was not among deep snow, with all outdoors for house walls, and the cold sky its roof. Across the lodge Howe still slept. Near him Dick

snored audibly, stretched flat on his back. Buck, squatting on his haunches, a stone pipe sagging down one corner of his mouth, regarded me with a quizzical smile.

"Well, we made it," he observed. "Though we're what yuh might call a hard-lookin' bunch."

"We certainly are. I'm afraid another day of it would have put the finishing touches to some of us," I said, with a shiver at the remembrance.

"Oh, I guess the rest of us could 'a' toughed it a while longer, but one more night out would sure have fixed him," Buck motioned to Howe. "A camp-fire wouldn't have been any use to him, the shape he was in."

"I hope he'll wake up in his right mind," I sighed.

"Oh, he'll be all right," Buck hopefully declared. "Kinda queer thing, wasn't it, him not knowin' any of us, and seemin' dead willin' and anxious to paddle his own canoe? Still, I suppose I'd be kinda batty if my head had been worked over like his has. I skipped up to the post a while ago and told that pill-thrower uh old MacDonough's to come down and take a look at him. Maybe Doc can straighten out the kinks he's got in his think-factory. He ought to be along pretty quick."

"Say, this bunch uh natives is all right, ain't they?" Buck continued. "We got roast caribou and some darn fine bread in the pot for yuh. I'll wake Morton, and we'll eat—and smoke. Get onto this ancient war-pipe uh mine. I got it from Howlin' Dog—peach of a name, eh?—and I raised some tobacco at the post."

Buck aroused Dick, and we indulged in the luxury of a wash, in a tin basin, before breakfast—which I am sadly misnaming, for it was long past noon when I waked up.

While we were sampling the contents of the pot an old Indian lifted the lodge-flap and stepped in. He smiled, said "How" to each of us in turn, and squatted impassively by the fire. Not till we had finished, and were good-naturedly squabbling about which should have the first whack at Buck's

pipe, did he speak again, and his first sentence brought a sharp exclamation from Buck.

"The devil he did!" Buck snorted. Then he grunted something in Cree, and the old fellow went on, his speech punctuated by many curious motions of his withered hands. When he'd finished Buck turned to us.

"What d'ye think!" he grumbled, a note of pure disgust in his tone. "That baboon-faced reptile actually had the nerve to foller us up, and some time last night he sneaked into the camp here and got away with a gun some damn-fool Injun left standin' outside the door uh his teepee. Got an ax and a knife, too. If there's anything in the devil takin' care uh his own, he's sure got an arm round the Ape's neck. They've started three uh their young men on his trail. If they don't take him in, he'll mighty soon fix up for the winter—and we'll hear from the jasper again before we get out uh this country; yuh can put *that* down in your little book."

Buck's prediction didn't sit very heavily on my mind just then. I was willing to take chances of a future encounter with the flat-faced renegade, so long as he had no power at present to deprive us of creature-comforts.

Howe rolled over with a yawn, and stared about him in utter amazement. Evidently he had no memory of our coming to the Indian camp (which, of course, when I came to think of it, was natural enough, seeing that he'd been delirious all day, and was only semi-conscious when we pulled in at night), and I leaned over and spoke to him, hoping that he'd pushed the mental obsession into the background and come to his own. But he hadn't. He was the same, taciturn, an integral part of the wild, as the night Dick and I came to his camp-fire and shared his food.

• Whether he butted blindly into a mist of uncertainty when he considered the past, or whether the personality that had saddled itself upon him provided a past of its own—a past to match his wilderness surroundings—I cannot say. If aught puzzled him, he gave no sign.

Capable, woodswise beyond our understanding, he was sufficient unto himself.

"No, I don't feel so bad," he answered me. "Indian camp, eh?"

"Yes; we didn't make Resolution—quite," I returned. "Would you like a bite to eat?"

"Uh-huh," he grunted. Then suddenly: "Did he get away?"

I nodded, rightly guessing that he meant the Ape; his eyes flashed, but he said nothing. He had said that he didn't feel so bad; maybe he wasn't in any pain; but he was wofully weak. So weak that when he tried to sit up he got no farther than on one elbow, and fell back again before either Buck or I could reach him.

And while we bolstered him and piled robes around him came a jingle of sleigh-bells outside, and Buck, after a hasty glance, announced with satisfaction: "Here comes the man uh medicine."

Doc Morrison, bulky with furs, crowded through the oval hole that embodies an Indian's idea of a door, and behind him came MacDonough—a grim old Scot he was, but as big of heart as he was scant of speech, essentially a man of action.

"How-de-do, how-de-do, gentlemen? I'm both glad and sorry to see you—upon my soul! I'm afraid the North hasn't used you very well. Frost-bitten, every last one of you. And Mr. Howe—shocking, shocking!"

The doctor's tongue waggled like a leaf in the wind while he was getting out of his coat. He bridled his volubility, however, when he began to examine Howe, which he insisted on doing before Howe breakfasted. For twenty minutes there was no sound in the lodge but the snick of scissors as he clipped away clotted hair and black, dead flesh from the ragged cuts.

When he'd finished, and Howe's head was enveloped in a turban of antiseptic-soaked lint, the doctor closed his instrument-case and turned to our elderly Indian visitor. I never learned the lingo, so I can't tell what he said, but the old fellow folded his blanket about him and left the lodge.

"An Indian teepee isn't the best place in the world for a man in that condition," Doc Morrison told us briskly, "but he isn't in shape to be moved at present. However, there's an Indian girl here who'll do passably well as a nurse—and he must have certain kinds of food, which you'll have to get from the post. Meantime, let me see what Jack Frost has done to the rest of you.

"Superficial mostly. Time and a carbolic lotion will heal them nicely," was his verdict, after an examination. "Now—ah, how about the feet?"

Dick reached down and felt gingerly his toes. "This right flipper of mine feels like a boiled ham," he remarked in a matter-of-fact way, as if a frozen foot was a commonplace thing of little consequence.

"A-ha!" the doctor snorted at sight of it. "You'll need some attention, my adventurous friend. Now, Mr. Morton, you must bundle up and come with me. I'll be delighted to have you as guest as well as patient—indeed, I insist. Possibly one of you will wish to stay with Mr. Howe until such time as he can be moved to better quarters, but there's no earthly reason why the rest of you shouldn't take advantage of what comfort the post affords."

We settled that without much parley. I elected to stay with Howe; more than skin-deep frost-bites, and sheer leg-weariness there was nothing much the matter with me. Dick, of course, had no choice in the matter. But when I urged Buck to betake himself to the post he flatly refused.

"This suits me," he said briefly. "Sick folks ain't none too cheerful company. I'll stay with yuh till we move together."

Inwardly I blessed Buck for that. Not that I had any real qualms about staying with Howe, but—I didn't want to stay alone. Foolish? Maybe. I wasn't cut on the heroic pattern; and the nightmare happenings of that long tramp had got sorely upon my nerves.

I was to go up in the sleigh with the rest of them and bring back some special grub for Howe. As Dick and I

got on our clothes to go, the old Indian peeped in, and on the doctor's nod drew back again, and an Indian woman stepped lightly through the opening.

I said "Indian woman"—I take it back. Dressed as a squaw she certainly was, buckskin, beaded and fringed, quill-decked moccasins, and wrapped in a blanket that rivaled Joseph's coat for gay coloring; but if Indian blood pulsed under that white skin the grace of it was hidden. Her hair was copper-brown, and wavy—wavy as Jean Holliday's; her eyes a deep, soft gray. Every feature, every line of her oval face gave the lie to her dress. Cree? A child of the Little People? Every mother's son of us—Anglo-Saxon, Celt, and Teuton—is a Cree if she was one!

Doc paused in a jovial diatribe against the length and rigor of the Northern winters, and turned the flood of his speech on her, in the throaty tongue of the tribe. He pointed to Howe, to Buck, and me, and she nodded assent to all he said.

"Now we'll go; everything is arranged," he chattered to us. "This, Mr. Hedrick, is Miss Ponoka"—laughingly—"the good fairy of the Little People of the North, in whose lodge you abide. With her assistance we'll soon have your friend on his feet again."

We clambered into the sleigh and went jingling back to the post. At the doctor's we unloaded Dick, and MacDonough piloted me to the company store.

"Man, man, but ye'd a fearsome time o't!" he commented, as we warmed our hands at a glowing stove. "Yon Ape's no' a man; he's a cunnin' beast wi' human shape. But bide ye easy. I feel in a measure *ree*-sponsible, an' I'll lay yon tyke by the heels yet. Ye are truly welcome here for the winter, but should ye wish—syne ye're rested an' healed—tae be hame, I'll gi'e ye a body-guard tae Edmonton wi' gude-will—I ha'e nae doot thae deevil's whelp wad tak' anither birl at ye, if he got a fair chance."

I started to express the hope that we'd seen the last of the Ape, when the

doctor came. He brought with him a sack of stuff, and as I was about to sling it across my shoulder MacDonough bade me wait for the sleigh—which offer I gave him no chance to withdraw, for the sake of my aching legs. When the sleigh appeared, and I was climbing stiffly in, he came out with a bundle and passed it to me with a dry smile.

"Maybe ye'll need some bit assistance tae murder the lang 'oors," he grinned, and stamped back into the store.

May the Land o' Cakes breed many more of his kind! When I got back to the lodge and opened the package, Buck and I offered up incense to the dour old Scot, for he'd given me a box of cigars, fat, fragrant Habanas—which, when you're a thousand miles from nowhere and hungry for a smoke, is better than gold and silver and garments of superfine weave.

CHAPTER XIII.

ONCE MORE TO THE TRAIL.

For many days thereafter we rested on our oars, so to speak. The dead skin peeled from our faces and fingers, the raw places healed quickly, and we grew fat and high-spirited in the lodge of the Little People. Time dulled the keen edge of recollection; in perspective the hungry days and shelterless nights seemed not so terrible. The sun rose, hovered for a brief span of time a hand's breadth above the tree-rimmed sky-line, then sank from sight in a welter of reds and yellows while the afternoon was yet young. Betimes, a blizzard swept gustily the valley, and a shifting, dancing snow-wall shut out sight of everything ten paces from our lodge. But mostly it was clear, and pitilessly cold.

Thus the days became weeks, and the total of weeks footed a calendar month, by which time Buck and I took to tramping restlessly from camp to post and from post to camp again, telling each other that we were fit for further pilgrimage. But Dick's foot was still too tender to bear the weight of a snow-

shoe. Also Howe's case confronted us like a Chinese puzzle.

Howe worried me. When he was well enough to be moved with safety he stubbornly refused to leave the Indian camp. As he grew stronger he retired farther into his shell, and seemed to look upon us as meddling busybodies when we inadvertently included him in our plans.

I speedily learned to curb my tongue in his presence, for he always got sullen and distrustful when I tried to rouse his dormant personality. He told me flatly once that our trail forked from there on, that he could take care of himself, and didn't give a continental what we did or where we went.

What under heaven he purposed to do, I never learned; still he must have had some course of action mapped out; a man doesn't go to and fro on the face of the earth without some object in view. He'd talk occasionally, always of the present. Once I mentioned the Ape, and he cut in with a black oath; but when I eagerly asked him if he remembered where and when he first met the Ape, a baffled, bewildered look spread over his face, and he shut up like a clam.

We came near to an open rupture at last, precipitated indirectly by that other enigma, Ponoka. The first few days of his sickness she was in our lodge from dawn to dusk, hovering like a guardian angel over Howe. After he began to mend, and could sit up and move about unhelped, she didn't stay there so much, but she came for a while each day. I liked her, and admired her, just as one would admire any dainty picture, but—I could see whither Howe was drifting, and I began to wonder apprehensively if his madness was to leave black shame and misery in its wake.

This day I'd been out prowling around among the lodges, curiously observing life as these nomads lived it. Buck was at the post. I came back to our primitive domicile and stopped heedlessly by the door—not with any thought of eavesdropping. I simply hesitated, one hand on the flap, as a man in a fit of abstraction might stand a

second at his own threshold. But that fit of absent-mindedness was of short duration.

Ponoka's voice drifted out to me as distinctly as though she were at my elbow—and her speech, words, accent, inflection, everything was the tongue a white man learns at his mother's knee!

For a second I was dumfounded. The eternal "Why?" rose up and mocked me. Then I reflected that even if Ponoka could speak English and was minded to reserve the accomplishment for Howe's benefit, it was really none of my concern. And so, trying not to appear conscious, I opened the flap and stepped in. But Howe's preternaturally acute ears had noted my momentary halt at the door. I knew it the instant his eye caught mine; there was hostility rampant in his glare. I'd barely seated myself when Ponoka got up and went quietly out, and the fringed hem of her buckskin dress had barely cleared the opening before Howe cut loose on me.

I won't repeat the things he said or the names he called me; decency forbids. And after a little, when my patience threatened to frazzle out, I left him to himself and went up to the post to talk it over with Dick. As I swung along atop of the rippled snow-drifts, the harsh creak of my steps kept time to the question I could find no answer for: "How the devil are we going to get him home? And what of his people—and Jean—when we get there?"

I headed for the store first, and there found Dick and the doctor deep in a game of chess. When the game was finished I interrupted the beginning of another, and blurted out what was in my mind. The doctor leaned back in his chair, gravely turning over and over in his fingers a pawn from the board.

"It's a peculiar case—most peculiar," he said thoughtfully. "I've been in hopes that as he gained in strength and nervous energy his mind would gradually return to its normal condition. But there seems no possibility of that, now."

"Then you don't think," I added, "that it's caused by pressure on the brain?"

He shook his head quickly. "I don't

think so. I've examined the skull carefully. Only one place gives indication of fracture, and there is no depression. Besides, pressure would produce a different set of symptoms. If not severe enough to induce protracted coma, he would be subject to incoherent vagaries, and on the contrary he is entirely consistent in his hallucinations. No, I have another theory—you are both, I take it, lifetime friends of Mr. Howe?" he abruptly queried.

"Of course," Dick answered, and I nodded assent.

"Were you aware that he has, up to a comparatively recent date, been addicted to the use of morphin—the hypodermic form?"

"What!" Dick raised in his seat, blank incredulity writ large upon his countenance. To me it wasn't so much of a shock. Not that I'd ever suspected such a thing. But my newspaper experience had schooled me in many phases of life that are hidden away from most people; it taught me that no class or breed of men has a monopoly in vice. We're all weak vessels and prone to fall, and the least a fellow can do is to show a little charity to a weaker brother. I hadn't thought it of Howe; but since I knew, it accounted for some of his moods in the earlier period of our journey to the North. I couldn't see, however, where it had any bearing on his present condition. Dick seemed to be honestly doubtful of the doctor's statement.

"It is a fact, I assure you," Morrison earnestly declared. "You've only to look at the myriad needle-marks on each forearm to convince yourself. It has occurred to me that the habit had weakened his mental powers—not perceptibly, you understand; it would not be noticeable, even to himself—and then in the Ape's raid he was clubbed unconscious, and also suddenly deprived of the drug. The shock, the lack of nerve-stimulus, and the impression made upon him by the lonely woods, accounts, in my opinion, for his unbalanced mind—but this is merely a hazard on my part. It's a puzzling case—altogether beyond me."

"If it was a combination of mental and physical breakdown caused by wounds and exposure and lack of a drug he was a slave to, how do you account for his abnormal hardihood, his resourceful cunning, doctor?" I argued. "Recollect that he was alone two days, without so much as a match to light a fire; yet he traveled as fast and as far as we did, and was vastly better off, except for his battered head, than we were when we overtook him. He's what you'd call a tenderfoot; he's never been exposed to hardship of any kind. Yet he was self-reliant and physically capable till his wounds and the stress of the trail sapped his vitality. That doesn't seem to fit in with your diagnosis."

"It does not," the doctor frankly owned. "I can heal the physical ills that afflict mankind, but psycho-neurosis defies my skill. I can only repeat that it's beyond me."

"Then you can't do anything further for him?" Dick said. "I wish you'd advise us in this, doctor. I'm responsible for getting Howe into this infernal mess, and I'll spare no effort to get him out. Anything that a friend can do shall be done. If money can help him, I've a modest fortune I'm dead willing to spend. What can we do? What would be best?"

"I would say get him home, or to some institution where he can have the attention of brain specialists," the doctor advised. "Personally, I hesitate to adopt radical treatment. It may be that an operation and examination of the brain would reveal the trouble and afford relief. Again, some sudden shock might instantly clear away the cobwebs, and bring him to himself. But—either might prove fatal, and I would be reluctant to proceed without the support of another physician. Therefore, if it be possible, get him to civilization as soon as possible, where he'll have every advantage that science and skill can give."

"I'd like to know how in thunder we're going to transport him to civilization, or anywhere else, against his will," I muttered gloomily. "If I know anything about it, nothing short of phys-

ical force will stir him out of that Indian camp. And we can't haul him bound hand and foot from here to Edmonton."

That rather feazed us for a minute. The doctor filled his pipe anew and called Buck and MacDonough from the rear end of the store, and the five of us held a council of war. The upshot of it was a plan to inveigle Howe to the post under the pretext of the doctor wanting to see him, and an attempt to hoodwink him into making the trip at the factor's behest. Once in Edmonton, we trusted to luck to get him the rest of the way. MacDonough was only too willing to help us in the matter of dog-teams and supplies—and two or three men, for the menace of the Ape was yet fresh in our minds.

"By the way, who and what is Ponoka?" I demanded of the doctor. It was a question I'd often wanted to ask and refrained lest I appear filled with unseemly curiosity.

The doctor smiled, and MacDonough shrugged his broad shoulders.

"That's been a riddle we've been trying to read the past three years," he answered. "Mac knows more about her than I do."

"The Little People, as they ca' theirsel's," MacDonough enlightened, "ha'e traded wi' us a matter o' five year. Whaur they cam' frae, originally, I dinna ken, an' they dinna tell. I' the summer they skirrup along the lake shore, an' i' the winter they're mostly tae be found a couple o' days' travel tae the north o' here. Four year back, they cam' in tae the post i' the early fall an' wi' them was this lass they ca' Ponoka. She was a slip o' a lassie then, a willowy thing wi' big eyes, an' shy as a loon. She's bided wi' the Little People an' queened it ower them ever since, an' they mind her weel. I dinna believe there's a bit o' red blood i' the lassie, at all; but she's a savage tae the core for a' that, or I'm mistaken. It's news, but nae surprise, tae hear o' her spoutin' gude Queen's English. Ye'll see mony queer folk, an' queerer happenings, in the North, Mr. Hedrick, if ye tarry an' obsairve."

With that, Mac lighted his pipe and lapsed into his habitual silence, and Buck and I betook ourselves to camp. Howe never even deigned to notice my entrance. But after a little he began to talk to Buck—he treated Buck to more of his confidence, at all times, than he did me; as if he recognized him as a kindred spirit—and by the time we were ready to turn in, he was in a tolerably decent humor. In the morning the doctor was to send word for him to come up, and I dropped asleep hoping that everything would come out all right.

After breakfast next morning Buck and I put on our snow-shoes and stalked away to the post. Half-way we met MacDonough's messenger, Henri Paleau, striding down to the camp of the Little People with the verbal bait to which we hoped Howe would rise.

At MacDonough's house Dick and the doctor joined us. Before long two figures left the cluster of lodges and came toward the post. When they came near enough to be recognizable I turned to the others.

"Look here," I proposed, "if he is not to be persuaded to make the trip in our company and cuts up rusty about it, I move that we prevent his going back to the Little People, at all hazards. He isn't armed. There's enough of us here to handle him without doing him bodily injury. We've simply got to take desperate measures. I've got a hunch that if he's left to his own devices much longer he'll become Ponoka's consort and drop into pure savagery."

"There's a room i' the back o' this hoose the arch-fiend himself couldna break oot o'," MacDonough volunteered.

"Then, by the Lord, we'll put him in it if we have to!" I cried, and Dick assented, though he plainly disliked such a radical proceeding and was hopeful of persuasion.

Howe and Paleau brushed the snow from their moccasins and came into the big, front room. I don't know by what process of reasoning Howe arrived at conclusions; perhaps he simply had an instinctive feeling that the five of us gathered around the stove had designs

on his freedom of action. Anyway, he came barely two paces inside the door, his face darkened at our greetings, and without a word he turned and deliberately walked out.

Buck and I leaped for the door, but MacDonough beat us outside. He cupped both hands over his mouth and sent a shout of warning across the post grounds: "Shut yon gate—an' lock it!"

The post, I think I mentioned before, was wholly enclosed by a stockade—an eight-foot wall of thick posts set solidly in the ground; relic of the days when a trading-point, set in the midst of warring tribes, had need of strong defense. Only one gate, wide enough for the passing of a Red River cart, pierced the wooden wall, and toward it Howe ran like a deer when MacDonough's voice uprose. But by chance, a "breed" outside the store heard Mac and obeyed him in a twinkling. Howe reached the gate just as the fellow turned the key in the lock, and as he sprang for the man with a snarl like that of a cornered wolf, Buck and I fell upon him. I dived headlong at his legs, wrapped my arms about them, and we went down together, and Buck clasped him in a bear-hug before he could strike a blow.

For a second or two the three of us thrashed in the powdery snow like so many huskies over a frozen fish, till Mac and the doctor, a trifle slow on their feet, but none the less willing to take a hand in the scrimmage, reached us, when by sheer avoirdupois we mastered him, and bore him struggling to the house.

He was in a perfect frenzy. Neither pleadings nor commands could calm him down; and so we carried him to MacDonough's private prison and locked him in.

Out in the big room, we sat down, panting, and looked at one another questioningly. Dick, whose game foot had debarred him from doing aught but hover on the edge of the ruction, stood staring out through a window. A long time he stood there, one hand beating a spasmodic tattoo on the frosted window. By and by he came and sat down.

"Since Mahomet won't go to the mountain, the mountain will have to be brought to him," he said tentatively. "How long will it take to go to Edmonton and back, Mr. MacDonough?"

Mac studied a second. "Well," he answered cautiously, "barrin' dirty weather, in which ye couldna travel, it should be done wi' gude dogs, by way o' the Athabasca, in about forty days—nae less. But ye'd no be able tae stand such a pace, wi' that foot."

"I'm afraid not," Dick admitted. "But it's like this: we can't take him out as he is. He'd get away from us if we trusted him, and if we undertook to haul him out bodily he'd probably freeze to death. Now, I have an idea that time and care will put him right again—I won't believe otherwise: And as we can't take him where he can have those things, we'll have to bring them to him. If you, Mr. MacDonough, will furnish the outfit to start, I'll send for a doctor who can help him, if any one on earth can—you remember Harrington Dibble, Tommy?—and between him and the doctor here I'm positive that something can be done for Howe. At least, it's worth trying. Don't you think so, Tommy?"

"I do. I think it's the best scheme yet," I heartily agreed. "I'm dead willing to make the trip. But do you suppose he'll face a jaunt like that?"

"Dibble," Dick answered, in a tone of firm conviction, "would start enthusiastically for the farthest Arctic regions or the heart of the tropics, if there was an interesting case to be treated—besides, he was family physician to Howe senior, until he went East."

So it was speedily settled that Howe should be held prisoner, and that Buck and I should fare forth in the morning, with two of MacDonough's best men and four strings of dogs, to span the five hundred miles of snow that lay between us and Edmonton. All that day we made preparation, and when night fell our camp-outfit was lashed to the toboggans, and the harness lay ready for the dogs.

And before dawn, with a hot breakfast to warm us, we marshaled the

snapping, growling huskies into the traces and turned our faces to the south.

CHAPTER XIV.

HARRINGTON DIBBLE, M. D.—AND AN-OTHER.

The dead, still cold kept its unrelenting grip from day to day. Flanked by the ever-present sun-dogs, the red man's god drove his short journey across the southern sky, and through the short hours he shone upon us we chattered encouragement to our dogs, and mile by mile ate up the long, white trail. Though scarce a day passed that one of us escaped the sudden burning pain in fingers or face that betokens the gnawing teeth of the frost, yet on the whole we fared well enough. We broke camp before dawn each morning, and until the dark shut down we kept our dog-teams moving, wasting none of the daylight hours for a noontime halt. And when we did camp for the night there was plenty of grub and steaming hot tea for all of us, a tiny tent and stove to give us heat and shelter, and robes to wrap our tired bodies in when we lay down to sleep.

Thus we passed Great Bend, Salt River House, and traversed the long stretch of silent valley that lies between the tumbling waters of Five Portages and Fort Chipewyan—long abandoned—coming to Lake Athabasca on Christmas eve. On the day of "Peace on earth, good-will to men," we crossed the head of the lake, with a keen northeast breeze, born of the two hundred and twenty miles of open lake-level, to hasten our footsteps with its icy breath. From there on we followed the Athabasca as the most direct route; Peace River had been our choice on the hunting-trip, when we had time to burn and a hankering to see strange country.

Once on the Athabasca, we fairly gobbled up the distance; twenty-five and thirty miles a day—every day. If there's any sixty-pound combination of bone, muscle, and savage temper that can travel farther, faster, and lug a heavier load than a trail-broke husky

dog, the men who fare up and down the North would like to know of it; give a husky a frozen fish for his supper and a snow-bank to sleep in and he'll pull twice his weight to the ends of the earth and back again. No storm blew up to hold us camp-bound, and clad in furs and buckskin the frost had no power to stay us. So in time we passed MacKay and MacMurray, lone posts set in a wooded wilderness, left Point La Biche far behind, and blew into Athabasca Landing one night at dusk. Thence to Edmonton the snow lay not so deep, the days began to be a bit longer, and we had a broken trail and much company.

Two hours from the time we swung across the north Saskatchewan I had drawn a pocketful of currency from the Hudson's Bay Company store—where Dick, with Heaven-sent forethought, had deposited five thousand dollars—and the wire that links Edmonton to the outer world was a-lum with a message to Harrington Dibble, M. D.

It was late that night when I got him located. The man of note had taken up his residence in New York when his name became a synonym for successful treatment of brain and nerve diseases, and thither went my first message on electric wings. After a maddening wait came a curt answer:

T. P. HEDRICK, Edmonton, Canada.

Doctor Dibble gone to San Diego, California. Address, Hotel Padrone.

J. BLOOM.

I uttered maledictions on the head of J. Bloom for his tardiness in replying, and sent a lengthy telegram speeding San Diego-ward. More impatient waiting; then a terse answer from the big man himself, that was in the nature of a command:

T. P. HEDRICK, Edmonton, Canada.

Give case in detail.

DIBBLE.

I grabbed a tablet of telegraph-blanks and took the eminent medico at his word. That telegram holds the record yet as the champion heavyweight in the annals of the Edmonton office. It was as long and as complete as an Associ-

ated Press despatch in election-time. I know the bill was a stiff one; but it brought results. They lost no time in delivering it at the other end of the line, for I'd barely got myself shaped for another beastly period of waiting when the operator reached for his key, pecked answer to his station-call, and, as the sounder reeled it off, transmuted into written words the medley of dots and dashes that spelled:

T. P. HEDRICK, Edmonton, Canada.
Shall start by first train.

DIBBLE.

God bless a man who can make up his mind to do a thing without taking a week to consider it!

The operator and I looked up time-tables, and by doing a little guessing, figured that Doctor Dibble would arrive in the evening of the sixth day—if he made proper connections.

That settled, I went back to the hotel where the four of us had taken up quarters, and caused the sleepy proprietor thereof to eye me with indignant surprise by demanding that a bath-tub, and at least a barrel of hot water, be furnished me before I went to bed—and it then two o'clock in the morning!

I dare say he thought I was the limit. A dirty, unshaven, smoke-tanned being, in greasy *parka* and buckskin trousers, wanting a bath in the middle of the night! But I got it, and I rolled into bed with a clean body and a clear conscience—never a presentiment that the drumming wheels of the Coast Line were hurrying a fresh heartache to me, and bringing up my ruined castles in Spain to mock me to my face.

On the morning of the sixth day another telegram heralded the doctor's coming, and at the appointed time the C. & E. train rolled down the twin strips of frosty steel and halted at the Edmonton depot. Buck and I drew near the sleeper steps and waited for the appearance of our man. I hadn't seen Dibble since I was a youngster, but his face was familiar enough; I'd seen it so often in the papers and magazines.

There weren't many passengers; and before long the shivering porter reached

out a hand to assist the doctor to the platform—but I passed up the famous man with a mere word of recognition, for right behind him came Jean Holliday. She hovered on the steps, smiling down at me, and for a full second I stared back at her, the most dumfounded man in Canada.

"Jean!" I cried. "What in the name of Heaven brought *you* here?"

"The train, of course," she retorted. "Ugh, but this is a shivery-looking country, Tommy."

It was too cold to stand there and gabble, and, anyway, for the time being I hadn't a single coherent thing to say. So we trudged across the street to the hotel, and at each step my wonder grew. Here was a complication, with a vengeance. But I didn't have long to wait for the "why" of it.

When we took stock of each other in what our host was pleased to term "the front parlor" I discovered that Doctor Dibble was Jean's uncle, which was news to me. And when the landlord had vanished up-stairs, with a suitcase in each hand, and Jean and her maid in his wake, the doctor sat down, crossed his legs, and bit off the end of a cigar with considerable force.

"I must admit, Mr. Hedrick," he began, in a disgusted tone, "that I've been guilty of an indiscretion that may cause you a good deal of trouble. Confound it! If I'd known I'd have lied like a street faker. You see, when I received your telegram I was staying with the Hollidays, and, naturally, when I announced that I had to go so suddenly, Jean was very much put out. She begged me to refuse the case—and in a thoughtless moment I explained that I couldn't, for both personal and professional reasons; that the patient was the son of an old friend of mine, and a very unusual case. In fact it was only when I'd told her that it was young Howe, and where he was, that I learned the true state of affairs. And then Jean cried a bit, and suddenly chirked up and calmly announced that she would come with me."

"It's a wonder," I hazarded, "that her mother and the major permitted it."

"They didn't!" the doctor exploded. "Nor did I. I forbade her to think of such a thing—scouted the idea. But I took the sleeper that evening, and, behold! whom should I espy in the morning but Miss Jean, seated opposite and booked through to Edmonton! Of course I couldn't take her by the ear and send her home in charge of a truant officer. Jean is twenty-odd, and a very capable young woman. You know my niece, Mr. Hedrick; she has the knack of getting her own way."

There was an interval of silence. The doctor leaned back in his chair, chewing nervously his cigar-end, and I was busy with my own thoughts.

"It's a long, hard trip, doctor," I said, after a little. "You'll need plenty of clothing, of the right sort, and even then there'll be a good bit of hardship of a kind you're not accustomed to. I'd like to start in the morning, if possible."

Dibble frowned. "The sooner the better," he replied. "If I can help Howe, a few days' wallowing through the snow, a little hardship, more or less, sha'n't stop me. I accepted those chances when I decided to come. Of course I'll be glad of your help to select what things will be necessary. The prospect of a hard journey doesn't worry me half so much as Jean's presence; I may as well tell you that she has declared flatly that her place is with Howe, and that she will go to the end of the road, whether or no."

"Good heavens, man!" I protested. "There's five hundred miles of the most God-forsaken territory I know, between here and Fort Resolution; it's a killing trip for strong men. She wouldn't——" I got no farther. Jean's voice hailed me from the stairs:

"Tommy, come up here, won't you, please? I want to talk to you."

Dibble grinned. "It's your turn now," he said meaningly. And so I went, leaving him to the speculative survey of Buck:

Jean was waiting for me at the head of the stairs, and I walked meekly into her room, but with the firm intention of squelching any notion she might entertain of tackling that semi-Arctic trail.

"Tommy, I want to know about Rex," she said abruptly, using the name we used to call Howe when we were kids together. "Is he really in such a condition that he needs Uncle Harry?"

"He is, and he isn't," I equivocated. "He's not in any danger, but still he couldn't stand the trip out. They couldn't do anything much for him back there, and, as we had to get a doctor, Dick thought it wisest to get one of the best."

She looked at me, and pushed some kind of fancy hairpin farther into the brown coil on top of her head. "Of course Uncle Harry has told you I'm going along," she remarked, just as if it were a junketing trip.

"Well, I can tell you that you're *not*," I blurted, making it strong while my nerve held out.

She lifted her eyebrows at me; it was evident, from the look of her, that she did not take me nor my assertion very seriously.

"When did you say you would start?" she asked, quite overlooking the argument.

"We start in the morning. Start out to buck five hundred miles of snow and cold, with dog-teams and frost-bite and long nights and short days, and no accommodations on the trail nor at the end of it," I told her bluntly, and, I'm afraid, rather bitterly. "And to make the play strong there's a half-human fiend running loose between here and there who will murder us all if he gets half a show."

"Lovely," she commented, clasping her hands over her knees and smiling at me in a perfectly maddening way. "I'll have to get a *parka* and snowshoes, won't I? And I'm sure I can learn to manage the gee-pole in a day or so, and cry 'Mush' at the dogs—you see I've read all about Northern dog-teams and drivers, Tommy. Or I'll cry 'Mush' and Uncle Harry can hang onto the gee-pole. I'd love to see him on the——"

"Jean!" I was desperate by this time. "You simply can't go! Do you hear me? You can't. It's a horrible trip for men. And Howe won't know

you when you get there. He doesn't know me, nor Dick. He isn't our old Howe; he's—Lord knows *what* he is! He's not sick—why, he's being kept locked up while I'm gone, or he'd be off into the wilderness, living like a savage and *liking* it. And——” I stopped there. I had to, for I couldn't face Jean and go on, with her looking at me like that. She was standing up, and her hands were doubled up into white-knuckled little fists. She looked as if she wanted to hit me.

“And yet you tell me I can't go! Tommy, you never cared for a girl—or had a girl care for you, or you'd know better. I'm going. If you object to having me go with you, I'll get an outfit and follow. I am going. Do you hear? If it were five thousand miles instead of five hundred, and twice as cold and horrid—so long as Rex is at the end of the road and—needs me.” Those last words came out shakily, and she was standing making believe look through a window that was coated an inch deep with frost.

I didn't say anything; I couldn't just then, for she had hit me harder than she knew. Almost before I had pulled myself into shape, she was facing me again, and trying her bravest to smile.

“Come on, Tommy; bundle up and go shopping with me. If we start in the morning, we must be stepping lively. I must go and get my snow-shoes and—*parka*, and whatever else goes with the local color. Mush on, Tommy!”

By that time she managed a laugh, but I knew it was next door to a woman's sob.

I got up, a chastened man, and “mushed.” She had me down, and she knew it, and knew that I knew it. After that, only a fool would go on arguing. I knew Jean of old. I knew that she cared—cared enough that neither frost nor snow would keep her from going to Howe. And since I could not keep her back, the least I could do was take her safely there.

Buck, Henri Paleau, and I ransacked Edmonton that night to find two more dog-teams, for Jean's advent necessitated another tent, an extra stove, and more

grub—added weight our dogs couldn't pull. And then, in the gray of the morning, Jean's maid balked—for which nobody blamed her—and once more we went a-rustling. But Henri, the smooth-tongued, got a half-breed girl from one of the camps, and after a few words with Jean she was ready to follow her to the north pole. So that soon after daybreak we were plodding north again.

CHAPTER XV.

A DAY OF RECKONING.

By now we had come to the very heart of winter, and, except in the thick timber, the snow was packed solid as wet sand, so that after we left the Landing and took to the river our dogs pattered over a smooth, hard surface, pulling the loaded toboggans with little effort. We lashed our snow-shoes on top of the loads and traveled easily in our moccasins. Our speed was limited only by the strength of the two women—and one of them was born to deep-snow trails, and for the other no day was too long nor too cold so it brought her that many miles nearer her journey's end.

The doctor—ah, there was a man! How many shining lights in the medical firmament, I wonder, would have faced the scowling North in the dead of winter, with a laugh and a jest for each turn of the road? After the third day, when his untrained muscles began to lose their soreness, he jogged along beside the dogs on trail, and pitched camp and rustled wood as if he'd been bred to it, treating the whole thing as a jolly good lark.

I remember the first time Jack Frost set teeth in the tip of his thumb; he showed it to Buck as if it were a wonderful thing, and rubbed it with snow and gravely watched the white spot fade before the warm blood, then chuckled to himself and went on. At heart he was a joyous, willing adventurer; he had the spirit that accepts disaster with fortitude, and hopes for better luck

next time. If he'd been a complaining hothouse plant, that uncompromising trail would have dealt sternly with him.

We had left Lake Athabasca behind us, and journeyed far down Slave River without losing a day. But such luck couldn't hold forever, and just below Five Portages, not far from where the Ape and François made their midnight raid, we pitched our tents one evening in a steady downfall of minute snow-particles—hard, cutting stuff, like diamond-dust. About midnight the wind changed from a whisper to a moan, then to a wild shriek, and the snow-whirl rose up and enveloped us like a morning fog. At daybreak it was still whooping merrily; we had no choice but to lie in camp.

That afternoon I learned from Jean what had sent Howe to the North with us, and why their engagement hadn't been announced at that dinner. I had left the doctor and our men comparing experiences north and south, and gone to Jean's tent for a while. Mimi, the half-breed girl, was curled in a corner, dozing, and while she slept, Jean and I, like the Walrus and the Carpenter, talked of many things.

"Tommy," she asked abruptly, "did Rex ever make any explanation about—about that last day in Seattle?"

I shook my head.

"It was on a Saturday, wasn't it, that you and Dick got our cards?" she went on. "Rex told me that Dick was in town, and that you were going away soon; I thought it would be so nice to have you all there together. And then on Wednesday morning he sent me a letter—oh, it was pitiful. Said he wasn't worthy, and—and lots of things. Said he cared too much to let me marry blindly a man that wasn't master of himself. I tried to reach him that day, but I couldn't. And that night he went away with you. I've wondered if you knew why?"

"I think I do," I muttered. "The post doctor told us."

"What a little thing it was, after all!" she sighed. "He told me in that good-by letter that it began in his last year at Berkeley, and grew and grew on

him. He'd mastered it for nearly a year, and then at the very last it rose up and conquered him again. And he didn't give me a chance to tell him it didn't make any difference. Oh, Tommy, Tommy, if ever you care for a woman and she cares for you, don't, *don't* put her on a pedestal and worship from afar. I wouldn't have cared; I'd have helped Rex fight it out, if he'd only given me a chance. But he didn't—he didn't. It wasn't fair to himself."

She was staring hard at the little, purring stove, and blinking fast. And I—I sat there a minute, twisting a bit of bark between my fingers. The things I wanted to say I had to keep to myself—I couldn't tell her that my heart was sore with pity, without telling her more. It was the eternal triangle, over again. I wanted to take her in my arms and comfort her and let all the rest of the world go; but that was another man's privilege, you see, and so I muttered some platitude and went back to the other tent, feeling as I imagine Howe felt when he was wrecking the Chancellor Café—at odds with all the world.

At dusk the boisterous wind had spent its strength; the clouds broke and vanished. Above the pole the Northern Lights waved, a glowing mystery, and well to the south a full moon hung low, flinging bold, black shadows of tree and bank across the drifted white. Only for the fresh-heaped, close-laid windrows of snow there was no trace of the twenty-four hours' turmoil. And when we broke camp in the morning the old chill and calm and the hard, steel-blue sky were about and above us as before.

That evening, in the last minutes of the long twilight, we set our camp on the river-edge. In an hour or so we had everything snug for the night; dogs fed, wood chopped, and tent walls banked with snow. In the "council-lodge," as Buck whimsically termed it, the lot of us were squatted about on our bedding, waiting for the supper that Mimi and Henri Paleau had joined forces to get. I was sitting hunched against the wall, midway between the stove and one corner. I had reached up and was idly fingering a seam in

the roof, when there was a sharp *plup*, and a hand's breadth from my fingers appeared a small round hole. Outside, and from quite a distance, came a staccato crack that made my heart jump. Mimi gave a startled squawk, and in the same breath Buck, with one quick movement, blotted out the candle.

"Drop down flat," he commanded sharply. "Quick!"

There was a little, subdued rustling, like field-mice in a bundle of straw, and quiet again. Doctor Dibble's professional instincts stirred.

"Is any one hurt?" he inquired softly. There was a chorus of low-toned negatives.

Jean, close by me, whispered: "What is it, Tommy?" and I could only answer: "I don't know." I could guess, though, and Buck voiced my conclusion.

"Punctured the tent, that's all," he drawled calmly. "But lay low, everybody, and we'll see what comes next. I guess it's the baboon, all right, Seattle."

He moved carefully toward the door of the tent, and in a little while a puff of cold air told us that he was peeping through the flaps. It was too hard on the nerves to lie there supine; I wanted to see whatever might be seen. Raising up, I felt the place where the bullet entered, and though everything was vague and indistinct, by straining my eyes I managed to locate on the opposite side the hole it had drilled in passing. With that to give me the line of direction, I lifted gently the edge of the tent and scraped at the banked snow till the way was clear for me to see.

The moon hadn't come up yet, so there was none of the deep shadow. Wooded upland and bare river-bottom alike were wrapped in the silvery sheen that floods a snow-bound country on a frosty night. I squinted along the line of the two bullet-holes, and by my reckoning the shot had come from the top of a timbered ridge that swept up to the river and ended in a straight-walled cut-bank, about four hundred yards away, on the farther curve of a short, sharp bend. I watched a while, then drew back, for

it was beastly cold, and I could see no movement.

Presently Buck withdrew his head. He opened the stove door gently, thinking to put in more wood, for the fire was getting low and the tent correspondingly chill. Lying on his side, he poked in a stick. As the red glow of the disturbed coals shot out of the opening and lit up a patch of the tent wall, a bullet clanged sharply against the sheet-iron stove, and Buck bit a cussword in two as he slammed the fire-box door.

"Hit you, Buck?" I asked anxiously.

"No," he growled. "Knocked ashes in my eyes, darn him! Say, we got to get that jasper, or he'll get us, Seattle. I expect he's locoed enough to do anything by this time. One thing, if he hasn't made a raise since he sneaked into the Injun camp, he ain't got any lead to waste."

A few minutes longer we lay quiet, so still we could almost hear each other's heart-beats. Then Buck moved over beside me, and I told him whence I thought the shots had come. He located the holes, peeped out, and agreed with me.

"In about half an hour the moon'll come up. She'll throw us right in the shadow," he declared. "When it does, I'll break for that timber and get around the bend and have it out with the gentleman. The rest uh yuh lay with your guns ready, and if he shows himself, cut loose. Don't be afraid uh hittin' me, because I'll keep under cover. *Sabe?*"

"I'm going with you," I quietly said. I felt that I, too, had a bone to pick with the Ape, if we could chance upon him.

"Yuh better not," Buck objected. "You're part-way responsible for this outfit, and yuh oughtn't to take chances. I got the best uh him once, and I guess I can go through again."

"That was different," I asserted. "Anyway, I'm going. Two guns are a heap better than one."

"If you're dead bent on it, all right," Buck grumbled, but there was that in

his tone which made me feel that he was nowise set against my going. Paleau and MacRae begged for a chance to get in the game, but some one had to guard camp, and the Ape had struck Buck and me too hard and too often for us to forego an opportunity to balance the account.

It seemed a long time to the rising of the moon, but it came at last; and as it cleared the sky-line a long, somber shadow stole out from the wooded bluff at our back, and crept swiftly toward the tents. Our snow-shoes leaned against the canvas just outside, and, with our guns handy, we crouched by the flap, waiting. Up, up, within thirty feet, and there the treacherous black blot halted and came no nearer. Bathed in the white rays, our grimy tents and toboggans and dogs lay plain against the drifts.

"She fell short," Buck whispered. "We'll have to make a run for it. Yuh better not go, Seattle; it's my fight."

I made an impatient gesture, and Buck untied the lower flap-strings.

"You fellers cover that bank," he said coolly, and stealthily slid a long arm out and got our snow-shoes. With them in one hand and a rifle in the other, we broke from the tent and raced for the protecting gloom.

He must have had the eye of an eagle, that vindictive brute on the bank beyond. We hadn't taken four steps, quickly as we went, when a bullet droned by our heads with the lilt of an angry bumblebee, and the familiar crack echoed up and down the river. Henri, from the tent, fired at the gun-flash, but he failed to make connections, for the Ape shot at us again just as we dipped into the edge of the tongue-shaped shadow on the snow.

But for that last shot things might have worked out different; chance, destiny, call it what you like. I leaped like a frightened rabbit to get out of the revealing white when his second bullet whistled by, stubbed a toe on a snow-ridge, and fell headlong. As I rolled over on my side, it seemed to me that a black spot, a mere speck on the brink of the cut-bank moved, and lying flat

on my stomach I fired almost without taking aim.

The black speck leaped to the full stature of a bulky man, poised an instant on the sheer edge, then fell, turning over and over like a winged partridge, down, down to the frozen river, three hundred feet below.

"Yuh got him, Seattle!" Buck gave a whoop of pure exultation. "Yuh sure got him. Holy smoke! but that was good shootin'. I never got sight uh him at all till he started to drop."

"We'd better make sure," I suggested. "He can't be any too dead for my peace of mind." I meant it, too. Maybe the grim, unyielding North had set its mark on me, warping my moral view-point and deadening my conscience. There didn't seem to be any right or wrong about it. It was simply our lives or his, and when it comes to a show-down a man will go back to the first law of nature, every time. It was his own game, and we beat him at it, that's all.

"Sure thing," Buck returned. "We ain't takin' any chances. Let's follow around the bench, and see where he had himself cached."

We put on our snow-shoes, and, after calling to the others in the tent not to smoke us up when we appeared on the other side, struck out through the timber, following the brow of the hill around the bend. Nearing the opposite side we came across the Ape's trail.

"See," Buck pointed out, "it's fresh. That jasper blew in there about the time we was makin' camp. He *sabed* who we was, and he couldn't resist the temptation to shoot us up a batch. Say, he wouldn't 'a' done a thing to us if he'd waited till daylight!"

Following the trail we stole cautiously up to the edge of the bank, not that we expected trouble, but, as Buck said, we weren't taking any chances.

"Look at that, would yuh!" Buck snorted.

The Ape had reconnoitered from the shelter of the spruce which ran up within a few yards of the chopped-off bank, and then crawled on all fours to the very edge and hollowed himself a

snug nest in the hard drift. No wonder we couldn't see him. Standing in his hiding-place, we could lean forward and look down the sheer wall. Straight below us a black place in the ice yawned wide, and the bubble of the open water rose faintly at first, then louder as we listened. I looked at Buck and he looked back at me.

"Air-hole," he remarked absently. "Let's go down."

We went along the bank until we found a sloping place, scrambled down, and turned back to the air-hole. Six or eight feet from the edge of it lay a fur mitten. Buck walked near, sounding the ice with the butt of his Winchester, and picked it up. He stared at it intently a second, then threw it into the swirling water, and the current sucked it under like a flash.

"Dead and buried, forever and ever, amen," Buck soliloquized. "Yuh can sure put that down in your little book. Well, darn him, he had it comin'."

Then we turned and went quickly back to camp and our rudely interrupted supper.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FINISHING TOUCH.

The fourth night from the passing of the Ape we made our last camp within ten miles of the post. At daybreak we were under way again, and before noon we quit the frozen river-road and strung across the open flat to where the reeking chimneys belched wavering columns through the glinting air. Below the post clustered the many-poled lodges of the Little People. It might have been yesterday that we left, for any visible change. Deeper snow, perhaps, and the sun riding a bit higher, but everything else the same. Sundogs, frost, immutable woods—and over them the hollow silence that ever holds the North in thrall and but grows more intense when the long winter shuts down upon the land.

MacDonough, Dick, and Morrison met us at the big gate. From divers places about the post doors opened for a peep at us; noses were pressed flat

against frosted window-panes. Even in the North it is counted no light task to buck a thousand miles of unbroken snow.

"Ye're returned, I see," was MacDonough's characteristic greeting. I could see him, out of the corner of my eye, appraising the added members of our party. Doctor Morrison, for once, forbore unlimbering his verbal quick-fire battery, contenting himself with a cheery: "How-de-do, everybody? A quick trip, indeed."

Dick had little to say, but he shook hands with all of us in a manner that bespoke relief. Jean, her head covered with a thick hood and her face muffled in the upturned collar of a fur coat, he passed up without a second glance, and when she laughed and spoke to him, he stared in amaze, doubting the evidence of his own senses.

"Snubbed in public, four thousand miles from home," Jean pouted. "Upon my word, that's a nice way to treat an old chum! I should think you'd at least say 'Hello,' Dick." She threw back the lapels of her coat and smiled mischievously at him.

"Jean Holliday! What in the name of Heaven brought you *here*?" he gasped.

"Dicky, Dicky," she retorted mockingly, "you're not half so original as you used to be. Those are the very words Tommy used, with a slightly different inflection, when I got off the train at Edmonton. What *would* bring one to this country?"

Dick muttered some unintelligible thing to himself, and that was all there was to it. He knew well enough why she'd come. There was frank admiration in his tone as he presented MacDonough and Morrison to her.

Without more ado Morrison took Jean and Mimi under his wing and hustled them off to the care of his wife. MacDonough marshaled Doctor Dibble to his own quarters, and Dick lingered to have a word with me while we stripped the harness from the dogs.

"He's just the same," Dick confessed when we'd finished and the three of us were hurrying to the comfort of Mac-

Donough's house. "Doesn't know anybody or anything he ought to; sulks half the time, and throws out dark hints of what he'll do to us once he gets out of our clutches. It's the queerest turn I ever knew a man to take. You'd think, to hear him sometimes, he was some reincarnated pirate. Physically, he's as well as he can be. Well, it's up to Dibble; I hope he can make good. But how came Jean to know? What an ungodly trip for a girl like her to make!"

I explained briefly, and Dick smiled understanding.

"Just like her," he commented. "She was always in a class by herself. She certainly has good nerve."

"Nerve!" Buck echoed emphatically. "She's as game as they make 'em. Pill-throwers and society belles never did look like much to me, but I take off my hat to this pair—and here's hopin' they don't lose out."

We tramped into the house and shed our heavy clothing. The warm room, the glowing stove, MacDonough's bluff hospitality, big armchairs to sit in, after days and days of monotonous plodding and squatting on robes—it all seemed mighty good to us, trail-weary as we were; there is a limit to the endurance of men, and Buck and I had put many a mile behind us since the first snow.

MacDonough brought forth a bottle of brandy; a stiff glass of that all round brightened us up. By the time we'd given Mac a terse outline of our trail-happenings, dinner was ready, and we sat down to a table once more. Just as the meal was finished Doctor Morrison came, and the two medicos straightway sat down to a professional discussion of the case. I won't attempt to record what they said—technical terms are too appalling—but it ended with their cigars, and Dibble announced that he would like to see Howe.

Morrison led the way to the room where Howe was a prisoner, and the rest of us made a fresh smoke and settled ourselves to await with patience the verdict.

Barring the fact of his being a

prisoner therein, Howe's abiding-place was cheerful enough; light and airy, with a good, clean bed, a table, and chairs. Only the inch-thick iron rods across the windows and the heavy, bolt-studded door made the place a jail.

Howe hadn't been a passive guest. Once, MacDonough told us, he smashed a window, and broke a stout chair to bits in a vain effort to loosen the bars; and another time he turned on the man who brought his meals, and fought like a fiend for the door-key. But Mac himself was in the passage, handy, and between them they got the best of him. After that they went to Howe's room in pairs—except Morrison; him Howe sullenly tolerated.

It was nearly an hour before they returned to the front room. I caught Dibble's eye in mute appeal; he shook his head doubtfully.

"Don't ask me, because I can't tell you anything—yet," he said, and sat down, relapsing into frowning silence. Evidently the outlook wasn't what one might call promising.

Morrison put on his coat and cap. "In about an hour or so, then, doctor?" he said inquiringly.

Dibble roused himself long enough to answer absently: "An hour? Yes, that will do nicely," then went back to his meditating, the crow's-feet at the corners of his eyes running out like the ribs of a fan as he chewed the end of an unlighted cigar.

"I half-wish I were a hypnotist," he muttered to himself, after a few minutes.

"Why?" I asked curiously; but he didn't seem to hear, and I let it pass.

We sat there for upward of three-quarters of an hour, a wordless, moody group. Even Buck, light-hearted and cheery through battle, murder, and sudden death, seemed to be cast down. MacDonough sucked steadily at a clay pipe, his face an expressionless mask. I didn't know what problem the knit brows and intense absorption of Dibble might portend, and I hadn't the temerity to ask.

The tension grew unbearable; it was like waiting for the crack o' doom. I

got up and paced the length of the room. As I turned, the door opened, and Jean and Doctor Morrison came in. MacDonough was on his feet instantly.

"Will ye no' be seated, Miss Holliday?" He pushed a chair forward, with a courteous bow.

"Thank you." Jean sat down, glancing from one to the other of us.

"I tried to persuade Miss Holliday to rest a while," the doctor addressed Dibble half-apologetically, "but she wished to come over at once."

"I came over to see Rex, Uncle Harry," she said evenly. "Where is he?"

"Uncle Harry" looked at her pityingly. "Wouldn't it be best to wait a little, my dear?" he temporized.

"I want to see him—now," Jean returned impatiently. "If you don't let me, I'll—I'm sure I'll behave dreadfully. Don't—don't be a bear, uncle."

He studied a second. "It will be a decided shock to you, Jean," he warned her. "He'll simply treat you as a stranger; and everything about him is so utterly changed. But if you insist—well, such things are more or less intangible—one can't tell how a familiar voice or face may affect him."

Jean stood up and threw off her wraps; cool, as if she were about to take a hand at bridge, no sign of what she felt—save for the red danger-signal that flaunted in either cheek.

"I think—yes, we must experiment more or less," Dibble went on thoughtfully. "I'll go with you, and Tommy—he hasn't seen you for some time, has he? You, too, Buck."

If Jean had any objections to our witnessing her meeting with Howe, she did not betray them. MacDonough preceded us and unlocked the door, and quietly, apprehensively, we passed into the barred and bolted room.

"Rex!" Just one word, but what a world of feeling it expressed.

He swung on his heel from the window where he stood with his back to us when Jean gave that half-stifled cry. Gaunt, bearded, his eyes glowing som-

berly, he faced us without a word, watching as a trapped animal might watch its captor. No hint of recognition came over his face till his glance fell on me, and then he spat out an angry oath and came a step nearer.

"You ————" he blurted savagely. "What d'you want?"

"Oh, Rex, Rex, don't you know me!" Jean shook off the detaining hand of her uncle, and went toward Howe, her hands outheld. Half in fear of, oh, I don't know what; a sort of ungovernable distrust of him in his obsession—I took a step forward, also.

But he had turned his attention to Jean, glaring at her with his lips drawn up into the snarling sneer of a husky bracing himself for battle. She spoke to him again. Roughly he shook off the little hand she laid lightly on his arm, and in the same breath flung out a vile blasphemy.

Oh, I acted the fool, and I know it! But it cut me to the quick to see the big tears start in her eyes, to see the white creep into her cheeks, and the pitiful quiver of her lips; that foul word sang in my ears like the hum of a fiddle-string, and the hot blood shot clear to my finger-tips. It was the finishing touch. I forgot that he wasn't responsible, forgot everything that I should have remembered, and in the grip of the same unreasoning passion that made me shake Crowley of the *Comet* from one end of his office to the other that day in Seattle, I took one long stride and swung a clenched fist for Howe's jaw with all the force of trail-hardened muscles and a hot heart.

It caught him fair on the point of the chin, a wicked blow—I'm no physical weakling; I weigh a hundred and sixty-five, and the double drill to Edmonton and back had toughened every fiber in my body—and he went down as if felled with a club, his head the first part of him to strike the floor. At the same instant Buck's sinewy arms closed round me.

"Holy smoke, man! Have yuh gone plumb bughouse, too?" he cried.

Jean dropped on her knees beside

him, with a little sobbing cry that hurt me far more than the black looks of Dick and the astonished stare that Buck bestowed upon me when he at length released his hold. The black fury was spent in a moment, and I stood aghast at what I'd done.

Dibble gently but firmly pushed Jean aside. He had sopped a towel in a pitcher of water that stood on the little table, and this he applied to Howe's forehead. Full five minutes they worked over him before there was so much as the flicker of an eyelid.

Then the color crept slowly back into his cheeks, his eyes opened wide, with an odd, questioning look in them, and—miracle of miracles! thanks be to the powers that sped my arm on that savage blow—he spoke to me in his old, languid drawl:

"By Jove! Where are we, anyhow, Tommy?"

"At Fort Resolution, old man, thank our lucky stars!" I almost shouted, and grabbing him by the coat helped him to his feet; while from Harrington Dibble, M. D., came a long, expressive "Ah!"

When he was solid on his pins, I took him gently by the shoulder and turned him face to face with Jean.

"Here's somebody that came a long way to see you, Howe," I said, as calmly as I could.

He looked at her unbelievably a moment, and Jean smiled at him with misty eyes—deep-gray eyes that were aglow with happiness. And—and then he took her reverently in his arms and kissed her before us all—and I stayed to see no more.

Out through the hallway, into the big front room I went, flipped my *parka* over my head, caught up cap and mitts, and hurried out of the house, away from the post, somewhere into the white, still world, where I could fight it out with myself. Have charity, ye of phlegmatic temperament; I was young, and the young take such things hard.

An hour later, and a good two miles from the post, I had walked the fever out of my blood, and the philosophy born of my lean year in the cities was

beginning to assert itself. I turned back toward the fort. Swinging along one side of a narrow belt of timber, I rounded a protruding clump of it and met Ponoka.

"Well met, O queen of the Little People!" I hailed recklessly. "Are you also out walking off a fit of the blues?"

She smiled and shook her head. "I came to speak with you," she answered in perfect English. "I saw you from our village. How goes it with the stranger who was sick in my lodge? Why did he go to the post and come back no more?"

"Because," I told her frankly, "he was sick not only in body but in his head, and while he stayed in the lodges of the Little People he could not be cured. So we coaxed him to the post and made him a prisoner, and brought a great medicine-man from his own country—and now he is well."

"I am glad," she said gently. "I pitied him, for he had many hurts, and I nursed him—and—and then he thought he loved me," she laughed softly, and dug up the snow with the heel of her moccasin. "Indeed he was sick in the head, as you say. But I wondered how he fared. The factor would tell us nothing. That is why I came to speak with you. You should be joyful," she added naively, "that your friend is well—yet you are sad."

"Blighted love," I flung out heedlessly. "Did you ever lose the one thing in all the world that you most desired? If you should chance to have that experience, you'll know just how I feel to-day."

She regarded me with a puzzled air, then looked away along the ragged woods' edge, where the lowering sun flung creeping shadows. "Ah, indeed I know. I was born among the wild people; but it chanced that in time I came to live where there is little snow and many men of your kind. And they—they cast me out for a little sin; whereby I lost many things—many, many things that were very dear to me. So I came back to the wild, where I was born—it is kinder to me than the folk of my own blood."

"Then you are a white girl," I exclaimed. "I was sure of it."

"I am white, of white people," she murmured, "but my heart is red. I am glad for your friend—and—and for you I shall be sad; for I know a sore heart heals slower than a broken bone. Good-by." And she was gone like a wraith in the thicket. That was the last I saw of Ponoka. The big, brooding North shrouds many a mystery.

To Dick and MacDonough and Doctor Morrison I am an odd mixture of good and bad; a well-intentioned sort of a cuss, but subject to gusts of uncontrollable temper—a perfect demon at such times. Even Buck told me gravely one day: "I like yuh, Seattle—yuh know that—but, by thunder, you're sure uncertain!"

Jean—I don't know what she thinks about it; she has never said a word; she treats me the same as of old, but—once or twice I've caught her eying me with a curious expression. Howe, not knowing the circumstances, treated it as a good joke when he was told that I laid him out.

So, you see, I've sort of lost standing with some of my friends, even though that rash blow effected what was beyond the power of medicine or surgery. Oh, well, I can't help it; and I don't much care. If they understood the "why" of it, they'd pity me—and I'd a heap rather be misunderstood than pitied. Only "Uncle Harry," kindly, shrewd old soul, guessed what ailed me that day, and he isn't the kind that tells. I know he knows, for he told me so one day, with his hand on my shoulder.

Howe cannot remember, and probably never will, what filled in the gap be-

tween the morning we halted to plan a crossing over that deep coulée and his waking at Fort Resolution with Jean at his elbow. He's honestly incredulous when we tell him.

I don't attempt to account for it. I do know that Howe, of California, could never have lived, sorely wounded and altogether without resources, two days in the winter woods alone. It took a Howe such as Dick and I came upon that night; a man of grim determination, with the woods' cunning that could devise rabbit-snares from useless bits of twine, and coax fire from the back of a knife-blade with a piece of stone. Maybe a little of the stuff which his adventuring grandfather told him lurked in the devious recesses of his brain sprang to the surface subconsciously when the need was great. Maybe the old man's spirit personally conducted affairs. I don't know. I leave the settlement of that to spiritualists and dabblers in psychology.

What a creature of moods is a man! Hunger and hardship, peril and pain, the North bestowed them all upon us in heaping measure. Yet there be times when I walk the streets with a pessimistic soul observing wearily the scurrying human thousands, and the smell of the big woods comes back to me, the shuffling patter of leather-shod thousands recalls the drift of the caribou herds; under my feet the concrete walks lie hard and unresilient like the Slave Lake ice; above my head the sputtering arc-lights mock me as the sun-dogs did of old. And I have a hunch—though I don't admit it, even to myself—that some time that same old North will call too long and loudly, and I'll go back—to stay.



As a Man Soweth

By G. B. Lancaster

An unusually brilliant character story, with the central figure a man blessed with a genius for controlling others, but unable to control himself. The story is written around the building of a bridge, and indicates something of the risks which the men employed on such a construction have to take continually.



IN the beginning of things the Kekaho fell due east to the sea through its notched clay hills, and whether it was in flood or in drought was not a matter of any moment to the world.

Then the white man came up the coast, because he comes everywhere if he is only given time; and he brought coaches with him which he tried to drive across the Kekaho where it yawns to the long shingle foreshore.

This was foolishness, as each snow river in New Zealand had proved to the white man unequivocally and often; and after fourteen years of proving the government saw that it was true, and spoke with Hutchenson's Iron Foundries and Steam Workshops.

From this day the Kekaho came into history, and made and broke several men in the doing of it. For Hutchenson sent Martin, C. E., and Forreste, his assistant, up from the south in the forefront of an army—riveters, fitters, gangers, masons, contractors, and lumpers.

They made a ten-by-thirty jetty out into the deep sea-water under lee of a bluff; received therefrom consignment following consignment of material per S.S. *Puketoi* from Hutchenson, and welded these things steadfastly and forever into the Kekaho Bridge.

The bridge grew through the baked fierce summer and the still red autumn

and the winter that sat on the irons and bit when the men handled them; and Martin and Forreste stood by each other silently through all—through the long days of straining work and unrest, when the rain washed over the swamp-land to the sea, and landslips came among the hills; through the strike that followed the taking of Hartley by an ungovernable quicksand, Forreste driving the line of drays round the quaking thing himself; through the trouble when the breakdown of the big crane had added delay to maddening delay, so that spring was upon them, and three cylinders yet to go down.

But four months of frost had laid the Kekaho safely by the heels up among the white hills; which was why Martin thanked Heaven openly for the sixth time in a fortnight, and came down to the pit of the river-bed in the wake of twenty laden wheelbarrows.

Behind him the groan and thump of blasting was bringing a permanent way out of the ironstone and blue pampas that rolled back in tussock-topped hills to southward. Through the run of heat-haze across the river, swamp-flax and raupo gave on brown manuka tangle that climbed to yellow tussock again, with a vivid sky-line and the slow wheel of a couple of hawks to break it. Strung from the swamp-flax to the shingle-spits that forked among the green-shrunk streams of the Kekaho were drays, crawling, backing, loading shingle to feed the lowland for what would be the approach when the

bridge got there. Between lay the work proper, and Martin's heart rose in him as he looked on it. It was a double-cylinder five-span bridge. Each cylinder was two yards in diameter and sunk thirty feet through shingle and boulders to bed-rock; each ballasted with concrete and set about its hinder end with solid blocks of masonry; each without flaw, or intent to buckle under stress of the eighteen-foot platform, the network of trusses, the crossed side-bars and mighty overhead beams, with, on occasion, nine tons of rolling stock added thereto.

So much was writ in the law, and the eighth cylinder was going down in obedience to it, while the compressed-air pumping-engine bucked and ramped on the swaying pontoon anchored to its sea-flank.

Forrester was in command at Number Seven cylinder, where the steam-crane gibbeted the last section black against the sun, and swung slowly to position. He stood on the open trestle beyond the clustered men in the orderly tangle of guys, struts, and half-placed girders, making himself into a semaphore that shouted and cursed the sun-dazzle earnestly. The cylinder appeared to understand. It veered, hovered like a gull about to settle, then dropped home, fair to the gaping round mouth that waited it.

Martin came over the flooring that quivered and hummed to the beat of hammers; and above and below him, to right, left, and behind, were workers. They perched in the bays of the girders; they stood on the booms; they wrought with the connecting plates and swung to the stays. And the whining complaint of joining iron and wood went through the hot air to the naked sky. Martin grunted approval over his half-lit pipe.

"Went on like a bird, lad," he said. "The fellows are loading up the concrete. You'll be ready?"

Forrester nodded, with watchful eyes on the gang that swarmed into and over Number Seven; blue-dungareed, forceful, noisy; bolting the flanges of the sullen red-brown column that was

to take the weight of the boulders that come in the floodtime, resembling sizable churches and productive of much trouble and profanity.

"You bet we'll be ready, my son. The last top goes on her to-morrow. What?" He wheeled sharply, to meet the word of a man from Number Eight cylinder.

"Last shift reports found bottom, sir."

Martin and Forrester did not look at each other. They looked across the bulk sheer against the half-mile-distant flash of surf, and Forrester's lips drew in.

"Bottom be hanged! There's good five feet to go yet. More! Near a whole section."

"Craig swears it's bed-rock," said the man.

"Craig's a—— All right! Get back to your work. We'll come over."

"It can't be," said Forrester; but his face was suddenly white.

"It shouldn't be. If it is, and we have to wait for a new shortened section——"

"I know. Shut it, Martin. I tell you it can't be."

He examined Craig with fierce cross-questioning; so that the shift admitted that it might be a rock; but it was most certainly a mighty big rock.

"I'll get some drills and fanoodles and go down to fix it. Bet my shirt it's only a rock, Martin."

Compressed air is shut into a cylinder by two cross-sections, of which one must close before the other can open. This effectually prevents leakage, and clinched Forrester's conviction that he was bearing the weight of all the world on his throbbing forehead and limbs. To Martin it was every day of two centuries before the boy came up out of the pit and said:

"Only a bally rock! Are there any steel wedges nearer than the sheds, Martin? An' I'll want some whacking big drills, too."

It is the law of nature, and known by all who work at these things, that a man suffers if he breathes cylinder air for more than sixty consecutive min-

utes, and it was because Forrester dared break this law that he suffered—after. For he laid one sixty minutes to another, and fought the rock through both, with the breathing pant of the air-tube above him. But the stubborn soul of the earth was yielding itself brokenly to Forrester; and for sake of it he bore the pain of his laboring heart and the swelling of his neck veins.

Then the wire rope wound him up to the wide hot day, and Martin ran up two ladders to say:

"You want your head knocked off, you darned young fool. But I'm hanged if you haven't done the trick!" Then he grabbed at the boy where he reeled, adding angrily: "And yourself as well, by the look of you!"

Forrester was ghastly through the daubed mud and perspiration, and there was blood round his mouth.

"Whisky," he said. "I must have a nip. Martin, I—I must have a nip."

Forrester was on parole concerning the locker of whisky and medicines in the hut beyond the line of store-sheds, and Martin knew by past proving what happened to Forrester when that parole was laid aside. His keen face drew into sharp lines.

"I can't go. They'll make an infernal mess of that side-riveting if I'm—well, take the key, then. But only one nip, Forrester. If you get that devil into you again neither prayers nor an emetic will drive it out until you've upset the apple-cart. D'you hear? Don't you make a fool of yourself."

"I'll leave that to Smale"—Forrester's eager fingers closed over the key—"he's patching that old pontoon with totara. Go and jaw him instead."

But that night the future of the bridge or the future of Forrester lay to be broken or to hold beneath Martin's hand. He went out into the moonlight to choose, leaving the bite of bitter words in the heat of the little hut where Forrester was very drunk.

Stringent manuka scrub ran among the boulders to the very door of the hut. Martin stepped through it, and past the gray-trunked cabbage-trees. The men's lines were afire with piled

tawhina scrub and driftwood all along the face of straddled tents, and the red light struck back from the dark water to the river cliff beyond. Far across the river low-dropped stars marked the tent-dwellers who were shingle-carters by day; and straight in the eye of the moon that hung on the sea-line a clear span of the bridge rose out of the night—ungainly in its half-welded strength; dear as a pet sin, or as a scar honorably won, because of the travail that it had cost.

"It's his work as much as mine," said Martin, biting on his pipe-stem. "But he's done now, and it'll have to be Paget. Paget; and as quick as I can get him. And, meanwhile—there will be the devil to pay."

From the tussock headland he went to meet the cool deep-sea water beyond the wash of breakers turning on a level coast-line that ran out among the stars to northward.

"And this is the end, and the beginning," he said. "There has always been the boy before. Now there will be Paget—and Paget can't swim."

In the morning Martin wrote a letter, and gave it to the mailman, who rode south over the fords, and connected with a coach that connected with a rail-head.

Then he went to his work, knowing certainly that hard things would be required of him before the advent of Paget. At noon the chain-barrel of the big crane fouled, bent, and gave over working; until Forrester, out in the unwinking sun-glare, rigged up a totally adequate and ingenious arrangement that hauled the concrete blocks uncompactly. And in the evening Martin went up the stony gully and brought Forrester away from bad whisky and other shame by pure force of muscle.

It was on Wednesday that the end of the old order of things came on to the bridge with Forrester. Martin, bringing body and brain to bear on the cordon of men round an up-ended traction on a shingle-spit, saw that which happened on the trestle-line that cut clear across mid-heaven, as a man sees an act in a play.

Forrester shambled down to Number Eight, and a lumper passed him with the click-clack of a couple of twelve-foot boards waking the air behind his shoulder. The spring of them took Forrester full on the arm. He wheeled, struck out with a curse, and the lumper went down to the shingle below with the clatter of falling boards about him.

The detached sense left Martin. He cried out, and ran blindly, listening for the crash. But somewhere in the staging that packed the trestle-flanks a blue arm shot out; gripped; held; and the two men fell athwart a cross-bar in a cat's-cradle of slings and ladders. Then the silence under the throat of the girders found breath, and tongues that shouted.

There were angry men behind Martin when he faced Forrester upon the bridge-head.

"Get off this bridge, Forrester," he said.

Forrester's hands shut up, and for one moment Martin feared for the open shame of force.

"You had better go quietly," he said. "For you shall go. Do you think that there are not enough of us to see to that?"

Forrester turned, with the life suddenly gone from his young face; shuffled to the unfinished connection, and dropped down the ladders where the tongue of the road ran to the abutments. He was sober in the twilight hour when Martin found him among the scrub and the cabbage-trees.

"Come out of there," said Martin, without preamble.

Forrester came, stubborn still in the disgrace that was eating up his manhood.

"You understood what I said this morning, Forrester?"

Forrester's breath caught, and his eyes wandered to the bridge.

"No. What?"

"Don't start any tomfoolery with me," said Martin, his temper rising. "You haven't done half a day's work since Saturday, and you know it. You were beastly drunk on Sunday, and you got stuff from old Jimmy when I

smashed the bottles you brought with you. This is going to be the old Taieri game over again, Forrester, and I'm not going to stand it. I told you then that this would be your last chance—and you've chucked that away to-day."

"Well, what's the good of jawing about it?" said the boy hardily. "I've chucked it away. What'll you do, then?"

Martin kept curb on his tongue.

"I've done it. I've sent for Paget."

Forrester's face changed.

"Paget! Paget! You sent—when? Martin, you——"

"Next morning. After that cylinder business. I warned you, Forrester. And he'll be here to-morrow noon."

"To-morrow! To take my place! Oh, my God! My place! And—the bridge——"

This was punishing work for Martin, also. Not Paget nor another would ever take the full of Forrester's work. He chewed his pipe-stem, and knew that it was better not to remember days when this boy had borne up his end of work unswervingly, ringing true to any bitter tests.

"I can't help it. I'd have sent Paget back if—if you hadn't been such a born fool. But now—you know in your own soul that it's no use now."

Forrester's face was set, and his thoughts went back down the months. There was that bolting of the masonry at Number Four, when a sudden spate threatened to wrench the half-set blocks apart. There was the blasting of that petrified tree in the third channel. There was the day when the girder-plates sheared through some faulty rivets and the whole camp had cheered him for that which he had done, alone, and with none other to share the danger.

"Then—you've chucked me out?" he said.

"You've chucked yourself out," said Martin, with his heart sore in him. "Damn it all, Forrester! D'you think the men would work for you after to-day?"

Forrester's eyes drew to the bridge, and his voice broke.

"I say, old chap . . . keep me on. Keep me on . . . somehow. Under Paget, if you will, though he's a bloomin' ass, and he'll never know a tithe of what I do. But . . . don't make me leave her. We—we've worked for her together. I understand her—and she's mine, too. Mine, I tell you! I won't have that fool messing with her! She is mine!"

Martin knew the truth of it. But as these two men had served her and worked for her, so it was she herself—the gaunt, powerful Kekaho Bridge—that held them apart.

"You shall leave her. For there will be a strike if you don't. And I'm not going to chance that with spring floods coming on, for any man living."

Forrester's heel grated on the shingle. He swung round, with his head low and his blue eyes dulled.

"I'll go," he said. "And damn you, who called yourself my friend, Martin! If I had a chance to pull straight it's gone now, anyway."

He went up the river toward the jaws of the gorge, and silence closed up behind his uneven tread.

"Jimmy's hut," said Martin; "and more whisky. But that was bound to come. Well, a man makes his own heaven and his own hell—which is no sort of consolation to the looker-on who happens to take an interest in that man."

Paget came up next day with the last consignment by the *Puketoi*; and he was desperately seasick and scandalized.

"You both slept in that place!" he cried. "In there! Where are the sheets—and the washing-basin? You are not at all the sort of man I thought you, Martin."

Martin giggled as Paget fell into the lower bunk. But he swallowed a desire for direct speech. Paget had to be borne, along with many other evils, and Forrester was gone, without explanation or leave-taking.

The work went on; and the hard, eager days linked closer, taking hot ends and beginnings from the short-ended summer nights. And the dread of the loosening snows walked ever

with Martin, and troubled his sleep. Then the mailman brought word from Hutchenson which sent him north to inspect a smaller river than the Kekaho, and one offering clean rock-connection for a two-span bridge.

Martin cursed the government and Hutchenson and all bridges made and to be, the while he flung last orders at Paget.

"I'll be away two days and a bit. Last cylinder should reach bottom tomorrow, and don't you meddle with the top section. Put on double shifts to fill her. Keep that masonry-clinching at the abutments going, and—and, for mercy's sake, use all the wit God gave you if anything goes wrong."

He splashed into the thin, greasy river streams, his whole soul calling out on Forrester. For many evil things come to pass in the making of a bridge, and it was not Paget who would foresee them.

That day went out; and the next followed with a steaming night and a brown smoke-curtain over the landward hills. The last cylinder was not down by some half-dozen feet, for there was a rip in the air-tube that called for hours of patching; and through the dark it gave out its hollow sound to the sliding waters as it parted them.

Nevertheless, Paget slept in a peace that woke with a shout and a sudden sweat of fear as Forrester jerked the clothes away and flashed candle-light across the room that had been his.

"Wake up, you lout," cried Forrester. "Paget! Paget! Are you going to wake?"

Paget blinked up at the face that told what Forrester had been doing in these later days; and by reason of his native insolence he fell into trouble.

"Now, my man," he said. "You clear out of this. You're drunk."

"Ah, stop that bosh!" said Forrester frankly. "There's a flood coming. The Maoris told me back of Keringa, and I came along to tell Martin. He's a bigger ass than I thought to leave things to you; but he has——"

"Bah!" Paget turned over with a

yawn. "Get out, I tell you! Come back when you're sober, if you want to speak to me."

Forrester was unshaven, and otherwise not good to look on. He had come out of a shameful pit to tell this thing for love of the work of his clean days, and Paget would not listen. He lifted him ungently by the collar of his pajama coat.

"Very well. Then I'll have to smash you first. . . . The flood will be down to-morrow, Paget, and you've got to save the bridge——"

Paget writhed free, and put the length of the room between them.

"Strikes me you're more in need of salvation than the blamed bridge," he said. Then he yelled, and flattened to the wall as Forrester twisted Martin's rifle from the slings above the bunk.

"Put that down. Will you do——"

"Will you shut up?" said Forrester, with firm fingers moving over lock and barrel. "I don't want to shoot, if you'll do as you're told. But the bridge has got to be saved; and if you don't do it, I will shoot. And I'll shoot straight. Now . . . there's that empty cylinder. You don't know how to fix her. I do. Look here——"

He sat on Paget's bunk with his torn clothes and the shaky old-man look that had been his payment for his youth, and he put the position and the covering of it into clear words, and very forceful. But they made Paget blankly angry.

"I'll be particularly blest if I do! The men would call me an ass."

"They may call you a mud-turtle, for all I care." Forrester took sight swiftly. "What are you going to do, Paget? One to ask; two to——"

Paget lay on the mud floor and groveled there.

"I'll do anything—anything. Yes, I will. Only put that down."

Forrester thought that it would be rather funny to put a bullet through that thing that whimpered on the mud floor. Then he remembered that the bridge must come first.

"Get up, you—you white grub! Do

you understand all that I've told you? Do you?"

"Yes," muttered Paget.

Forrester dropped the rifle into the hollow of his arm.

"I'm going to sit in the rocks to-day, and see that you do it. I'm good at most shooting up to fifteen hundred, y'know. And—and if you come feelin' round after me, Paget, you'll get your fingers pricked. Don't forget."

The night took him with its soft, hot shadows; and Paget crawled to his bunk, to lie under the lash of sick fear and unstable wrath until the red sun called him out.

The Kekaho slunk through the caked shingle as it had done yesterday and for an infinity of yesterdays. But Martin's rifle was gone from the slings on the wall; and Paget did not forget the face that had gone with it.

"He is drunk," he said. "Mad drunk. But—he means it. And he's not going to plunk lead into me for all the bridges in creation."

And for this very potent reason he braved unhid contempt and rude amazement; doing things which carried the open conviction that it was " 'bout time the boss comed back, 'fore the 'ole show was busted up."

It was part of Hutchenson's economy to lay on one man's shoulders rather more than he could bear; and because of this, Martin's foreman was an incompetent, working on low wages.

When Paget ordered the whole carefully connected system feeding the river-bed work to be taken to pieces and flung everywise; the men swore under breath, and did it.

"But there's going ter be blue flames when Martin gits back" said one, unmooring the heavy chains that left the great crane freedom to swing slowly down-stream into shelter of the bluff that stood at the river-mouth.

And another, who drove a hurrying traction past with a clatter of shingle, and a haystack of timber, nodded, and spat afar into the water.

"May I see 'em!" he said. "That's all."

But any half-dead doubt of Paget's

sanity gave at knowledge that the unsunk cylinder was to be filled with water and choked beyond all fear of rocking by the cross-sections. Paget was only obeying an unseen force that sat at the tail of a rifle somewhere beyond the embankment; but the men could not know this.

They struggled sullenly and without heart throughout the dry heat-white day; and it was drawing to evening before Craig, crossing a stream for the nineteenth time, felt the water mutter and take life about his knees. And at the very instant a puff of soft wind cooled his right cheek.

"By the Lord Harry!" he said, and stood motionless. Then he slapped his hand on his thigh. "He's wuth the lot on us," he cried. "That sawney fool-in' Johnny is wuth the lot on us. Fur it's the wind! It's the wind!"

Paget himself headed the storming of the trestlework on the rear flank of the bridge. His orders ran full and convincing. The talk of the milky water as it raced past the obstructions gave him courage; and the sudden, mighty uprising of the nor'west found him on the crowded bridgeway; commanding, directing, salvaging overlooked dangers and buckling them into safety. And only Paget and another knew that this was parrot-talk, and that the cunning was not of his brain.

As a stag bells to its mate across the open moor, so the thin streams called, rose, widened, and spattered their hearts out in dirty foam against each cylinder-curve. The nor'west drove the smoke-haze down and caught up the dry sand, whirling it to the sea through the screaming horror of a cloud-wracked night.

Paget went to his hut and gave the foreman whisky and cheerful words.

"A few loose trucks will go," he said. "And that forge in the gravel-pit. But I think we've saved the bulk, eh?"

"Thanks to you, sir," said the foreman, in a new respectfulness. And he sent the word through the lines that Paget was a wise man.

But while Paget slept to the creak

of tortured cabbage-trees and manuka, something came out of the rocks and crept down to the bridge-head where the ramp of the wind blew it flat. Then it wriggled, as a snake wriggles, across the planking, down under lee of the latticework and on to the spiderlike trestles. It swung from beam to beam by clutching hands, showing to the moon Forrester's white face, wild-eyed, and desperate about the lips, but strong in purpose to reach that water-logged cylinder that was the key-note of the whole. He could do nothing when he got there. He realized this with a sudden childish disappointment when his bruised hands slid over the top of it. But a power beyond man's sense had brought him. He had come to end off his work according to the reasoning of his sodden brain. Beyond doubt the bridge would go to-night. Then he would go with her, taking the broken promise of his life and all the good deeds dreamed of and not to be, down to the clean, welcoming sea.

The great, straining world of earth and sky and thundering surf cried out in its pain. Through the cloud-wrack the race of unleashed wind came down over the tussock heights to wrench great matais and hinaus from their rock fastnesses, and to toss them into the Kekaho. And she took them, and rammed them at the flying cylinders.

Forrester heard them come; and he heard the crash of splintering spars above the shrill octaves of the nor'west. The weight of iron beneath him quivered, and stood like a struck thing.

Forrester clung to the scaffolding, bareheaded, his blue eyes exultant.

"We're going out together," he shouted. "Together! We're done! We're both done! Oh, God, you'll take us together!"

But Death was slow in coming. He was not there when the wind muttered and died in the chill before dawn. He was not there when the murky sunrise woke, to show a boiling sweep of water where a village had stood but yesterday and a level line of smooth iron curves that met the slap of the water with all their new-found power.

Forrester lay on the trestle and turned his face to the yellow dawn.

"She doesn't belong to me any more," he said. "She's going to stand up to it, and—I can't. She would be ashamed of me now. She's too strong. Too strong."

He crawled off the bridge, with the soul dulled in his eyes. Light winked on the glass in Paget's window, and Forrester straightened suddenly.

"An' that brute will get all the glory," he said.

Martin gave it without stint when he left his foundered horse in the flooded flax and came at the double down the firm tread of the bridge. But out in the surf, under the evening sky, he rather desired to take his words back.

"For the devil might have suggested it to Paget, but it's not in him to do this on his own. Then what . . . now, if that is the man himself, he'll be drowned in something under two minutes."

It was not Paget. The steady sidestroke that clove the smooth water was known to Martin of old, and he spoke as the dripping fair head bore up to windward.

"Forrester!" he said. "Have you been dead all these days? I've wanted you badly, old lad."

Forrester trod water, and laughed.

"Next time you light out an' leave Paget in charge of something too big for him, fill up your pop-gun first, will you? I'd have been in a tight fix if that fellow wasn't such a howling funk, y'know."

Martin's face was blank; then light came.

"I might have known! I should have known! I want kicking because I didn't know. Of course it was you! But how——"

"Bailed him up at night. Told him the floods were coming, and filled him

with the necessary understanding. I never saw a fellow quite so sick before. But he wouldn't have remembered an eighth of it if I hadn't put the fear of all things into him with that rifle. An' you never left one cartridge, you careless, old galoot!"

"He never told me! Forrester—Forrester—why didn't you say it before? Why didn't I know that Paget *couldn't* think of it? And it's too late now! It's all gone down to headquarters, and Paget's a made man forever——"

"Much good may it do him! He'll buckle up at the next test! Martin, she's no slouch of a bit of work, our old girl, is she? I think she's come to stay, all right, eh?"

The quiver in the voice jabbed at Martin's heart.

"Old man, we must straighten this out. You must get the credit. I'll wire to Hutchenson——"

"My word against Paget's, and my character against Paget's? Don't try to be so very funny, old chap. What do you think?"

"Forrester—are you going to pull in again?"

Forrester's drawn face was gleaming in the wave-trough.

"No," he said slow and very distinct. "Even the work of my hands is stronger than I am. I—I thought I was going down with her last night. That was my only chance, and it's gone now. I must go down by myself."

He turned and struck out for shore, calling over his shoulder:

"So long, old chap. I'm off. You'll find your shooter up on the cliff. Don't scare Paget with it."

Beyond the drift of pitiless water Martin's eyes wandered to a star on the sea-rim.

"You don't care," he said. "You little beast! you don't care! But there was a bigger light than you put out when that boy went wrong."



Where Friendship Ceases

By A. M. Chisholm

Author of "In Sheep's Clothing," Etc.

How a sympathetic seaman was inveigled into a declaration of affection, and the alarming course of action pursued by a friend in need in his desperate efforts to rescue the imperiled captain from the whirlpool of matrimony



CAPTAIN JACOB PODGER sat at ease in his small garden smoking contemplatively. The evening was warm, and he had removed his coat.

From his chair he commanded a view of the quiet street, and farther off a patch of harbor water gleamed golden-yellow with the blaze of the sinking summer sun. An ancient white parrot of dissipated appearance occupied a cage standing on a rustic table near-by.

A lady in all the glory of freshly ironed white garments passed down the street. Looking over the low wall, she bowed to the captain. The latter rolled out of his chair with the grace of a startled walrus, but the lady shook her head.

"I'm in a hurry," she called. "How well your garden is looking!" With which remark she passed on, and the captain, after a hesitating moment, relapsed into his chair and watched her out of sight.

Shortly after he sighed, shook his head, sighed again, and remained staring into vacancy, his pipe clutched firmly in his teeth, for a space of several minutes.

"Old fool!" croaked the white parrot, in a tone of deep conviction.

Captain Podger removed his cold pipe from his mouth and stared at his accuser wrathfully. "Old fool!" repeated the parrot, with gusto.

The captain replied with a phrase consigning the bird to eternal misery.

The parrot repeated the words after him with great exactitude of intonation, ending in a furious screech and flutter as the pipe of his irate owner struck the bars of the cage.

Mr. William Jenks, emerging from the house in search of his crony, the captain, paused in astonishment.

"Wot are you doing to Jerry?" he inquired.

"Learning of him manners," replied the captain, perceiving that his pipe had now a broken stem, and shaking his fist at the cage, an attention which the parrot acknowledged by a repetition of the original offending phrase.

"Listen to him," said the captain. "What do you think of that?"

"Parrots knows a lot more than people gives them credit for," said Mr. Jenks solemnly.

Captain Podger eyed him suspiciously, but failing to detect any sign of hidden meaning, grunted, and invited his visitor to fill a pipe. Mr. Jenks sliced carefully at a yellow plug, and distributed himself comfortably on two chairs. Having applied a match to the load and drawn half a dozen puffs, he regarded the captain's garden with approval.

"Plants is coming on nicely, Jacob," he remarked.

"Fairish," said the captain grudgingly.

"Nice a garden as there is in town," continued Mr. Jenks, with enthusiasm. "It does me good to see it, and to see you working at it. It's good exercise."

"Why don't you have one of your own?" said the captain shortly.

"Wot, me?" said Mr. Jenks, surprised. "I don't need exercise; I'm in good health."

"So am I," said Captain Podger.

"Well, I hope so, Jacob," said Mr. Jenks, in a tone the reverse of hopeful. "Curious; the last time I heard them words was from Jeff Crosby. 'I'm in good health,' says he to me, and a week after that he was a corpse. I wouldn't boast, Jacob."

"You said it yourself," replied the captain. "You said you was in good health."

"Well, I am," said Mr. Jenks; "it was you I was thinking of."

"Don't you worry about me," said Captain Podger. "I'll carry you out yet, William."

"Just so poor Jeff used to talk," said Mr. Jenks, in a softly reminiscent tone. "And he was 'here to-day and as grass to-morrow,' as the Scripture says. One thing, you've got no wife and children depending on you."

Captain Podger grunted, and, drawing a cigar from his vest pocket, bit off the end savagely, and lit it.

"That's one of the beauties of living bachelors like us," continued Mr. Jenks. "No one depending on us, and we can sit out in our shirt-sleeves and smoke and have our little drop of a evening and nobody to object. Now, if we was married, like as not we'd have to wear a collar and sit on the front porch and have the preacher call on us. We've a deal to be thankful for, Jacob."

"Maybe," said Captain Podger doubtfully. "Did you ever think of getting married, William?"

"Once," replied Mr. Jenks. "But I was very young," he continued, as one who qualifies a damaging admission.

"Why didn't you?" pursued the captain.

"Against the law," said Mr. Jenks. "Her husband was a policeman, and I used to think if he'd die, I'd marry her if she'd have me, but he didn't die. Course I never mentioned it to her."

"Nor to him?" said the captain.

"Cert'nly not," said Mr. Jenks. "'Twouldn't have been delicate."

Captain Podger pondered, and Mr. Jenks blew spirals of smoke to the memory of his early love.

"And so," said the former, after an interval, "you were only in love once."

"I only thought of getting married once," replied Mr. Jenks, with dignity. "I've been in love a lot in my time."

Captain Podger nodded his appreciation of the subtle distinction.

"Having only thought of getting married once, and that time the lady having a prior encumbrance, as one may say, and you not asking her to marry you for that reason and the bigamy laws, to say nothing of morals, I'd suppose you never did ask a woman to marry you, William."

"Then you'd suppose wrong," said Mr. Jenks, with some heat. "I allus asked 'em to marry me. It was like a habit."

"And didn't none of 'em try to marry you when you asked 'em?" queried Captain Podger.

"Cert'nly," said the experienced Mr. Jenks. "Two of 'em tried. At oncet."

"How did you get out of it?" asked the captain.

"Got engaged to another one," answered Mr. Jenks.

"But you didn't marry her, either," said Captain Podger, in bewilderment. "How did you manage not to?"

"Well," said Mr. Jenks, "I give her cause for jealousy, and to pay me out she got engaged to another party wot I had a grudge against. I've forgiven him since."

"Hol!" said Captain Podger, "then I may take it you know what is asking a woman to marry you and what ain't?"

"For breach-of-promise purposes, you mean?" asked Mr. Jenks, scowling sagaciously.

"Just so," said Captain Podger.

"It depends a lot on circumstances," said the expert. "What is asking in one case ain't in another. And, again, it depends a lot on the age of the lady; the older she is the more is apt to be

took for granted, and so the less a man has to say. And then there's the question of how her male relatives looks at it. Wot are you asking for?"

"I have a friend," said Captain Podger, with obvious embarrassment, "who has been on speaking terms with a lady more or less off and on for the last year or so. It's his opinion this lady has formed an attachment for him, and he ain't sure but he may have been the innocent cause of leading her to expect to fly his colors. He ain't what you might call guarded in his speech, and he never expected to be took serious."

"What's he said to her?" demanded Mr. Jenks.

"Well," said the captain slowly, "he's remarked about her cooking and the way she keeps her kitchen garden, and he's told her what a lonely life it is being a bachelor with no one to do cooking and mending except the hired help; and he's told her wot a lucky man her husband was."

"That ain't breach of promise," said Mr. Jenks. "That's called alienating a wife's affections, and it's serious."

"Her husband's dead; she's a widder," said the captain.

"Ho!" observed Mr. Jenks. "Well, a man may tell a widder woman a few things without expectin' her to believe 'em, the burden of proof being on her to show why she don't know more than to believe all she's told. It don't size up to breach of promise yet, Jacob. To get breach of promise you have to ask a woman to marry you, or as good as ask it. Wot else has he said?"

"He told her one night he loved her," said Captain Podger reluctantly. "Now, I put it to you, William, is telling a woman you love her equal to asking her to marry you?"

"No, it ain't," said the sage firmly. "I've always maintained it wasn't, and I do so still. Most men do—that is, them as has had experience. They have to do it or be bigamists. The worst feature is that women think the opposite. That's what makes trouble. Their minds ain't logical, and they jump at conclusions, when none is meant. If you've told her you love her, Jacob, the

chances is that she thinks you mean business."

"Me!" stammered the captain. "We ain't talkin' of me at all. It's—it's a friend of mine!"

"Bosh!" remarked Mr. Jenks scornfully, fixing the blushing mariner with his eye. "I know you, Jacob, and you needn't go for to deny it. Why don't you marry her?"

"'Cause I don't want to," replied Captain Podger indignantly. "Wot do I want to get married for? I'm comfortable the way I am, and here this woman must go a-leadin' of me on. It's this way. She's Mrs. Brown. Since Brown died she ain't had no one to advise her about her business, and she takes to asking me about it. That means I'm up to her house off and on. One thing leads to another. She a good-lookin' woman, and I'm a man, ain't I? Well, then! Her affairs gets so durn complicated it takes me 'most every night to straighten 'em out for her, and in the course of doing it I say more than I intend, and she takes it the way it ain't meant. Who's to blame for that? Not me! And now she acts as if we was engaged, and what to do about it I don't know."

The possibilities of the situation overwhelmed Captain Podger. He shook his head sadly and refilled his broken pipe. Mr. William Jenks, also, shook his head and pursed up his mouth. The parrot, taking heart of grace in the silence that followed, leered wickedly at his owner and broke into a raucous-voiced string of impolite expressions which happened to chime with the captain's mood.

"My sentiments exactly," he observed, "only I never can think of 'em all at once the way Jerry can."

"Was he ever owned by a pirate?" asked Mr. Jenks.

"Certainly not," said the captain. "I brought him up myself. Why?"

"Nothing," replied Mr. Jenks, "only I thought he might have been. How do you think Mrs. Podger will like his ways?"

Captain Podger gave oral proof that the parrot was a pupil, merely. "Look

here," he said, at the end of this demonstration of superiority, "if you can think of any way of helping me out, you say so, and if you can't, quit making a joke of it. It's too serious. How am I to get out of this mess, anyhow?"

"If she could hear you and the parrot," suggested Mr. Jenks hopefully, "it might help a lot."

"Talk sense," replied the captain irritably.

Mr. Jenks pondered. "So far as I can see, there's only one way, and that is to find some one else for her to fall in love with and throw you over. And that's not easy to find."

"I've always been a good friend of yours, William," said Captain Podger insinuatingly.

Mr. Jenks, looking at him in some alarm, said nothing.

"Many's the good turn I've done you," pursued the captain reminiscently, "and I've always said 'If ever I need a friend, William Jenks is the one, tried and true, I can tie to in a pinch.'"

Mr. Jenks received this affectionate tribute coldly, and remarked that he must be going home.

"Don't go yet," said Captain Podger. "Now, here is the case, William. I'm in a fix, and need a friend with tact and knowledge of women to help me out. You're my friend, and you know women like a book. Consequently you help me, and it's easy for you."

"How can I help you?" asked Mr. Jenks discouragingly. "By going and getting engaged to her myself and letting you out, I s'pose? I'd look sweet doing of it. Me and her and white ribbons and old shoes, and you standing back heaving rice and grinning. Oh, no, Jacob! I've got enough troubles of my own already. Besides, chances are she wouldn't look at me, having you. Fine, handsome-looking man you always were. I don't blame a woman for taking to you."

"Now, see here, William," said Captain Podger appealingly, "this can be done, all right. You don't need to get engaged to her. All you have to do is to pay her attentions. That makes me

jealous. She sees it, and she encourages you. That gives me my chance to drop out, and I drop."

"But it don't give me *my* chance to drop out," objected Mr. Jenks, unconvinced.

"You don't need any," said Captain Podger. "You're never in. You put things delicately, so they don't mean anything the way you know how to do, and there ain't your equal for that anywhere, William, and when I get out you come, too."

"Well," said Mr. Jenks hesitatingly, half-won over by this tribute to his diplomatic attainments, "I s'pose it might be done. Tell you what! You give me them binoculars of yours—the French ones—and I'll do it."

"It's a bargain," cried Captain Podger, "and, what's more, William, I won't forget your kindness in helping me out. And now I may as well tell you that I've an engagement to call at her house to-morrow night, and if I know anything about women, it would be a serious thing for me to keep that engagement alone. You'll have to be there before me, and when you go I will, too."

And the two friends thereupon went deeply into plans for the campaign.

Mrs. Brown possessed a small cottage and a little plot of ground. She was Westport's only milliner, and managed to make a modest living by the proceeds of her business. The cottage aforesaid and life insurance of one thousand dollars were all that Brown, deceased, had to leave behind him, his habits having been convivial and his requirements rather in excess of his income. For the four years that had elapsed since his abandonment of this world for another but not necessarily a better one, Mrs. Brown had supported herself, and she found the process irksome. Then Captain Podger presented himself as a possible alternative.

The alternative Mrs. Brown decided to take. Captain Podger was known to be well-off, and his wife would have presumably a future of ease and plenty. Therefore, Mrs. Brown did not intend

to run any chances of losing her admirer, and arranged her plans carefully for the evening following Captain Podger's conversation with Mr. Jenks. These plans involved the complete conquest and subjugation of that gallant mariner.

Consequently she was somewhat annoyed when she responded to the ring of the door-bell at eight o'clock the next evening, to recognize in her visitor, Mr. William Jenks. That gentleman was attired with care, and actually wore a flower in his buttonhole.

He made himself comfortable in the easiest chair, and showed every indication of an intention to spend the evening. He complimented Mrs. Brown upon the decorations of her best room, and made a tactful allusion to her personal appearance. She found herself blushing slightly, and was pleased.

When Captain Podger arrived, an hour later, he found them deep in conversation, and, to all appearances, on a very friendly footing. He expressed his regret at being late—a nine-o'clock call was an unheard-of thing in Westport, and flavored of the improper—and alleged business as the cause.

Mrs. Brown, not displeased that he should find a third and a presumably, to him, unwelcome, person present, gave Mr. Jenks the greater share of her attention, so that Captain Podger, after several attempts to bear his part in the conversation, gave it up, and sat glooming while the versatile Mr. Jenks rattled on.

When ten o'clock struck, Mr. Jenks, remarking the lateness of the hour, arose to go, whereupon Captain Podger also took his leave and departed with him, somewhat to the disappointment of Mrs. Brown, who endeavored to prevent his departure by mysterious glances and motions of the head, which the captain densely failed to interpret as signals. However, she took comfort in the thought that he had had a small lesson, a conclusion which received indorsement in the tone in which Captain Podger thanked her for a very pleasant evening.

"It worked like a charm," said the

captain, as he and Mr. Jenks, by a silent understanding, laid a course for "The Dog and Duck."

"This part of it's easy," replied Mr. Jenks. "Later on, when you have to be jealous and I have to give you cause to be and not lay myself open for trouble, is where we have to be careful. But she ain't a bad-looking woman, Jacob, and she can talk."

"They all can," remarked the captain philosophically. "What you might do is to drop a hint or two about my character, but not too strong, so's she'll believe it. That might help some."

"Don't worry about that," said Mr. Jenks. "I'll give you a character to fit the case."

"You're a true friend, William," said the captain enthusiastically. "What'll you have?"

"Mine'll be rum and milk," said Mr. Jenks; and the captain duplicating the order, they passed the remainder of the evening sociably.

The next day Captain Podger considered it advisable to be called away on business, and this proved so important that he was absent for a fortnight, while Mr. Jenks improved the opportunity by calling on Mrs. Brown several times and establishing himself in her good graces. Occasionally Captain Podger furnished the topic of conversation.

"Yes, I've known him off and on for quite a while," said Mr. Jenks, in answer to a question, "and he's a queer one, is Jacob Podger. Néver no telling what he'll do. It must be a sunstroke he had in the tropics years ago. He'll be all quiet for months; and then he'll break out."

"Do you mean that he drinks?" said Mrs. Brown.

"Enough to float a boat," replied the veracious Mr. Jenks. "But that ain't the worse. He's violent, and them he thinks most of he's liable to do an injury to. Didn't you ever hear of it?"

"No," said Mrs. Brown, in wide-eyed astonishment.

"It was only about two months ago," pursued Mr. Jenks. "He'd met with some heavy property losses, and had been drinking more than common. He

went out of his head, like, and tried to kill Tom Lee, his Chinaman, with an ax, to get his savings. I suppose it was his losses did it. He lost a lot." And Mr. Jenks sighed.

"Why, I thought he had a good deal of money," said Mrs. Brown, aghast.

"Not now," said Mr. Jenks sadly. "It's all gone—gambling."

"Gambling!" echoed Mrs. Brown, in horror.

"Cards and stocks—and worse," said Mr. Jenks. "He ain't what you would call a moral man. But these things ain't fit for them little pink ears to hear, and I'll say no more."

Nor could Mrs. Brown, fascinated by the evil life of Captain Podger suddenly revealed to her, whereof she thirsted for the details, extract another word.

"How are you getting on with Mrs. Brown?" asked Captain Podger, on his return.

"Fine," replied Mr. Jenks, with calm pride. "I've give you a reputation to live up to, Jacob. I've told her you drink hard and gamble."

"You have, eh!" grunted the captain.

"You've lost your property a-doing of it," continued Mr. Jenks firmly, "and you live a fast life unknown to any one. Wot else have you been away for, nobody knows where?"

Captain Podger, breathing hard, looked the indignation for which he could find no words.

"And you go insane at intervals, and act violent," continued Mr. Jenks. "In your last spell you tried to kill Tom, inside there, to get his savings to squander at cards and low pleasures. Wot do you think of that? Ain't it artistic? I tell you no woman would so much as look at you if you had the character I've give you."

"But she'll tell it to her woman friends," gasped the captain, appalled by the possibility.

"Like enough," said Mr. Jenks coolly. "You ain't likely to be bothered by any more females—not in this town, anyway."

Captain Podger, choking down the appropriate expressions that occurred

to him, entered his house and slammed the door. He did not emerge for two days for fear of meeting some female in possession of his alleged history, and the oddity of this behavior excited comment, the consensus of opinion being that he had been on a gorgeous drunk and was recuperating.

The news filtered through sundry channels, reached Mrs. Brown, and swept away such doubts as she had entertained. At the same time, however, a piece of good fortune descended upon her which drove other things entirely from her mind. A great-uncle, whom she had never seen, and of whose existence she was barely aware, died, and left her nearly five thousand dollars in cash.

Now, on the very night following the day when she heard this news, Captain Podger emerged from seclusion, and, impelled by the remnants of a conscience, made his way to her house. There he found Mr. Jenks installed in the easiest chair in very close proximity to another chair which bore evidence of recent occupation in the form of a lady's handkerchief.

The captain thought he had never seen Mrs. Brown looking so genuinely happy. On the other hand, Mr. Jenks' manner was cold and unfriendly.

"Oh, Captain Podger, have you heard the news?" cried Mrs. Brown, unable to restrain her joy. "My old Uncle James has died, poor old thing, and has left me five thousand dollars. Isn't it splendid? I mean isn't it sad that he should have been called away?" And the handkerchief crossed a pair of very bright, dry eyes.

"Five—thousand—dollars!" breathed the captain. "Five—thousand!"

For a moment he could scarcely grasp the possibilities of the situation, and when he did, it was with a feeling of unreasoning anger toward Mr. Jenks.

"I'm very glad," he said, with diffculty; "nothing is too good for you, you know."

"Why, that is just what Mr. Jenks said," said Mrs. Brown, glancing brightly from one to the other.

The two men's eyes met in a glance

of cold suspicion, and then Mr. Jenks smiled with an air of insufferable superiority.

"I meant wot I said," he remarked.

"Do you mean to say I didn't?" demanded the captain savagely.

"Not at all," said Mr. Jenks. "I only said I meant wot I said."

His tone implied much, but while the captain was racking his brains for an appropriate reply, a ring of the door-bell announced an influx of Mrs. Brown's lady friends, overflowing with congratulations, and the men beat a retreat.

Once clear of the house, Captain Podger addressed Mr. Jenks.

"William, we've been doing a thing we shouldn't have done—trifling with a woman's affections. If I've given her any cause to think I intend to marry her, why, I'll stand by it. I'm obliged to you for what you've tried to do for

me, though you bungled it shocking. It'll give me a lot of trouble to explain the lies you've told, but I forgive you for it. Only let it be a lesson to you to stick to the truth hereafter, and not go imposing on unsuspecting females."

"Captain Podger," said Mr. Jenks, with dignity, "when I tried, as a friend, to do you a favor, I never intended to act unmanly to a unprotected lady. The more I saw of her the meaner I felt you were treating her. She is a million times too good for you, and I'm going to marry her myself."

"You are!" snorted Captain Podger.

"I am," replied Mr. Jenks firmly. "I asked her to-night, and she said 'Yes.'"

"You asked her when you heard she had come into that money, you miserable fortune-hunter!" cried the captain.

"Well," said Mr. Jenks, with a grin, "them things might have happened sort of simultaneouslike."



THE MISSION OF THE SKELETON

A WEIRD story of how Chopin composed his "March Funèbre" is told by Ziem, the artist. "When I entered the studio," he says, "Chopin was seated near the window and his lips were moving, though no sound came from them. In one corner was a piano, and in another a man's skeleton covered with a cloth. I noticed that now and again Chopin's gaze would wander, and, from my knowledge of the man, I know that his thoughts were far away from me and his surroundings. More than that, I knew that he was composing.

"Presently he rose from his seat without a word, walked over to the skeleton, and removed the cloth. He then carried it to the piano, and, seating himself, took the hideous object upon his knees. A strange picture of life and death!

"Then drawing the white cloth round himself and the skeleton, he laid the latter's fingers over his own and began to play.

"There was no hesitation in the slow, measured flow of sound which he and the skeleton conjured up.

"As the music swelled in a louder strain, I closed my eyes, for there was something weird in that picture of man and skeleton seated at the piano, with the shadows of evening deepening around them, and the ever-swelling and ever-softening music filling the air with mystery. And I knew I was listening to a composition which would live for ever.

"The music ceased, and when I looked up the piano chair was empty, and on the floor lay Chopin's unconscious form, and, beside him, smashed in pieces, was the skeleton. The great composer had swooned, but his march was found."

The Man Who Was Dead

By Arthur W. Marchmont

Author of "In the Cause of Freedom," "When I Was Czar," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

The scenes are laid in Serbia at the time of the revolution. An Englishman, Guy Pershore by name, connected with the consulate, has just parted from a beautiful girl, Normia Obrenowitz, in Valjavo woods. But a minute later he hears her cry for help, and finds her struggling in the grasp of two men. In saving her he is wounded by a bullet and rendered unconscious. Recovering, he finds that he is in the house of Stephanie, Baroness Dolgoroff, who loves him, but for whom he has no regard. Of Normia he can hear nothing; but later she sends him a letter stating that she is leaving Belgrade, and they can never meet again. This letter he shows to his chief, only to learn that Normia claims to be a princess, and is a dangerous woman. It is known in Serbia that there is a plot to overthrow the Government, and that at its head is Prince Lepova, who aims at the throne by marrying a princess acceptable to the revolutionary section. Pershore is sent to Vienna to find out what he can. The baroness warns him to leave the city at once, as his life is threatened. One foggy evening, when Pershore goes back to his rooms, he finds his cousin, Geoffrey Pershore, who resembles him closely in features, lying dead in his armchair, evidently murdered in mistake for himself. Geoffrey is one of Prince Lepova's spies, and all the nature of the conspiracy is laid bare by a paper in his pocket. Guy Pershore intends to take this to his chief at once, but is frustrated by three men—Hammerstein, Yuldoeff, and Doctor Arnheim—who appear in his room, mistake him for Geoffrey Pershore (known to them as Gerard Provost), and think the dead man is Guy. Doctor Arnheim, however, entertains suspicions, so Guy is taken to the Black House to meet the baroness.

CHAPTER V.

HOPELESSLY ENSNARED.



THE drive was a short one, and when we pulled up under the great portico Hammerstein and Yuldoeff linked their arms in mine and led me into the house in the same

fashion they had brought me out of my flat.

We passed through a wide hall, where a number of servants and others who were in attendance stared at me curiously. From here we turned at right angles along a broad corridor, and entered a room near the end. The lights were switched up, and Arnheim went away, leaving me in the charge of the other two.

Ask a question I dare not, of course. To have shown any ignorance of the house would have betrayed me. I en-

deavored to assume a manner of indifference with a dash of indignation at my treatment. But the situation tried my nerves to the utmost.

There must be, of course, dozens of men about the place who would be able to detect the difference between Provost and myself in an instant, and what would follow, where men were as desperate as these, was certain enough.

Even if the imposture were not discovered, matters were about as ugly as they could be. The inference that, as Gerard Provost, I had murdered myself, Guy Pershore, had been drawn instantly by these three men, and every one would jump to the same conclusion. I could only hope to save myself for the time by fathering that deed; and if I did so, any hope of afterward clearing myself would become ten thousand times more remote.

On the other hand, if I were recognized as Guy Pershore, I should be held answerable for the death of Pro-

vost, their comrade. I should be known to have taken possession of his papers, and so to know all the secrets of their plot. If, before this, they had deemed me dangerous enough to seek my life, there was not even an infinitesimal chance that they would spare me now.

It seemed that whatever happened I must be irretrievably ruined, even if my life were not immediately taken. All the influence of my father's old friend, the minister, could not prevent my having to stand my trial for murder; and to prove my innocence, after the fatuous things I had done, would baffle the wit of man.

For over an hour I sat in this distracted mood, seeing nothing ahead but death in some shape, either by the men I was trying to fool, or by my own hand. I welcomed even Arnheim's return as a relief from the gloom of those thoughts.

He beckoned to the others, and they led me back through the hall, up a broad stairway to the floor above, and, without having said a word, they ushered me into a room where, to my astonishment, not Prince Lepova, but Stephanie alone was awaiting me. She sat at a table littered with many papers.

Her eyes were flashed on my face as I entered, and I saw by the look in them and the nervous start she gave, that she recognized me. But the start was instantly repressed, and she affected to finish the reading of one of the papers before she looked up again.

She was a consummate actress, and she glanced at Arnheim, who was watching her eagerly, with a smile of reassurance; and then turned an impassive face to me.

"Doctor Arnheim brought me a singular story, Monsieur Provost. As, except to myself, you are known to scarcely any of us, and even to them only very slightly indeed, he was inclined to be misled by the strange resemblance you bear to the enemy of our cause, the Englishman Guy Pershore, who has paid for his enmity with his life. That is the reason why you have been

brought here so unceremoniously. You have but to ask him, and he will, I know, offer you an ample apology."

It was very clever. It put me in possession of the facts, and at the same time left me to declare the truth if I dared. I turned to him.

"Well, Doctor Arnheim?" I said.

"You are quite sure?" he asked.

She frowned, and her nostrils dilated slightly in anger as she glanced at him.

"I am not sure that I understand that question, Doctor Arnheim. Once before I had occasion to speak to you on the subject of your doubts of Monsieur Provost, remember."

"I will find means to deal with this gentleman later on," I said.

"I will have no quarreling, Monsieur Provost," she returned sharply. "You must bear in mind that the doctor has our cause at heart to the full as earnestly as you can have. His doubt was quite excusable. If you had been the Englishman, you would have had to answer for the death of our comrade and follower. You will give him the assurance he asks, if you please."

There was no help for it, so I made the avowal.

"Of course I am Gerard Provost," I declared hotly. "And he shall answer to me for this."

"Doctor!" said Stephanie.

"I am satisfied, Monsieur Provost. I apologize to you for my mistake, and for all that has occurred in consequence," he replied, and offered me his hand.

"I don't want your hand, and won't take it."

"Monsieur Provost, I insist," said Stephanie.

"That makes no difference to me. This is a personal matter, and concerns us two alone." Take the fellow's hand I would not. With a shrug he turned away.

An awkward pause followed, broken by Stephanie. "You have the papers from Belgradé, monsieur?"

I emptied the wallet and gave her the contents.

"I have to question Monsieur Provost privately, doctor. Let the prince

know now, and ask him to come to me." With that the three men left the room.

As soon as we were alone Stephanie laid down the papers and looked at me.

"Can I go now?" I asked.

"I have just risked everything to save your life. Is that your answer? Where would you go, to whom, and to say what?"

"Can I go?" I repeated. "Or am I a prisoner still?"

"Seeing that I have just freed Gerard Provost, that is——"

"An end to this pretense. You know me well enough," I broke in impatiently.

"I know you to be Gerard Provost." I waved my hand in protest, but she took no notice of the gesture. "But of course if you prove me to be mistaken, you leave me only one alternative. I must let my friends know of that mistake. If you were Guy Pershore—the man whose death stands as a glorious credit to you as one of us—then you would have to answer for the death of Provost, for your possession of these papers, and for your knowledge of all our plans."

"But you know the truth perfectly well."

"I do not dare to know more than that you are Gerard Provost. You have read these papers, of course?"

"Yes."

She lifted her brows and shrugged her shoulders. "Then how would you act were you in my place?"

"What are you going to do?" I asked, after a pause.

"I will do my utmost to save your life, but you must not make it impossible. You cannot go free from here as Guy Pershore; you must be content, for the time at least, to be known as Provost, our follower; and you must pledge me your sacred word of honor not to reveal a syllable of what you have learned from these."

"I am to be one of your spies, you mean?"

"He was little else, it is true; spy and messenger, but trusted. You will have a different part. I have great in-

fluence, and you will be known to have my confidence. I can save you from the desperate men among us in no other way. Besides, if you were to be free to carry this news to your chief, the lives of hundreds of others would be jeopardized. No. That door of escape for you is close shut and double-barred," she cried vehemently.

"You threaten my life, you mean?" I returned bluntly and moodily.

"Is that fair? Did I not risk everything to warn you, and you laughed at my warning? Have I brought about this present position? Did I bring you here? Have I not just acted and spoken this lie to save your life, betraying all these who trust me? Did I not leave it open to you to declare yourself? Hate me if you will, and scorn me; but be at least honest. And it is not honest to use my words to escape an avowal before the rest, and now that we are alone to look to me to let you go, that you may carry the news you have gained to our enemies."

"What are your terms, then?"

She paused and dallied with the papers before her, then looked me full in the face as she answered slowly: "I have no terms. You have created the position, and must do as you will. You are either Guy Pershore or Gerard Provost. You cannot be both. You are free to choose, but the choice must be final."

"Plainer, please."

"If you are Guy Pershore you will have to answer for the death of Provost. If you become Gerard Provost, then Guy Pershore is dead. You know how it has been arranged to account for his death. The cause of death will be formally certified, the funeral will take place, and all suspicion of the manner of his death will be buried with him as completely as all knowledge of his real identity. You will never again be other than Gerard Provost."

"It is maddening, devilish!" I cried, beating impotently against the net which held me hopelessly in her power.

"Why did you kill the man?" she asked suddenly.

"I kill him! I had no more to do

with his death than a child unborn. I found him dead in my rooms on my return there."

She dropped her eyes on the table. "It is at least a strange coincidence," she said significantly. She did not believe my protest. "You had quarreled often?"

I laughed in sheer bitterness. "Say at once you don't believe me."

"What I believe is of no avail. Before Arnheim and the others you accepted the responsibility for his death. You were in possession of his papers. Your hands were stained with his blood. If you are innocent, how can you clear yourself—I mean in the judgment of others?"

I began to pace the room a prey to overwhelming agitation. Every word she spoke in cold deliberate tones went right home. It was the verdict every one would give upon the facts. "I cannot clear myself," I groaned. "I know it. I cannot. To try and face it now would mean conviction. You have me fast bound in your toils, and may well gloat over your triumph."

"I am as far as the poles are asunder from gloating over you, Guy. If I can help you, I will. Surely, surely, I have proved that," she cried, with a passing wave of excitement. "But this is as much to me as to you; to my life as to yours. And time is pressing. You must decide. Will you pledge your honor not to reveal your identity and what you have learned?"

I hesitated, and then agreed. I had no option. "Yes. I pledge my honor."

"And the rest. Are you Guy Pershore or Provost?"

"Can't you see all that it means to me? I must have time to think."

"It is not in my power to grant it. Prince Lepova will come any moment, and I must say you are Provost or that I have been mistaken."

"I can go before he comes."

"Yes, if you tell me in what character you go."

"I will go," I cried, resolving like a coward on flight.

"It will not help you to try. Nothing can save you unless you join us."

"I will go," I repeated, and was hurrying to the door, when it was opened by a tall, slight, distinguished-looking man of some forty years of age, with a thin, strong, saturnine face, and a pair of the blackest and most piercing eyes.

"Ah, your pardon, monsieur," he said courteously, his singular eyes expressing considerable astonishment at my ruffled, agitated looks. "Monsieur Provost, doubtless?"

I drew myself up and returned his look in silence.

"Monsieur," said Stephanie, rising, "Prince Lepova spoke to you. You must decide now, if you please."

The prince came into the room and closed the door behind him.

"They told me you wished to speak to me, baroness." His looks from one to the other of us showed his perception of an undercurrent between us which he did not understand.

"It was to hear this gentleman's decision, prince."

"A decision of Monsieur——" He paused, and turned to me, with suspicion as well as perplexity in his eyes.

I drew a deep breath and clenched my hands in the strain of that moment of fateful decision, and my voice was husky with emotion.

"Gerard Provost, Monsieur le Prince."

My emotion mystified him.

"Of course. I was told you were here. And the decision—what is that?"

Stephanie came to my rescue.

"There is a little more under the surface than we can explain for the moment, prince," said she, contriving to imply in a smile that there was some personal understanding between her and myself which was for the time a secret. "Before he went on this journey, something passed between us involving a great change in Monsieur Provost's position among us. He did not wish the matter mentioned yet; I, on the other hand, wished to let you be the first to hear of it. He was hurrying away as you entered, and so I think it may better be deferred. It will be

enough if I say that Monsieur Provost has now my entire confidence, prince."

What did she mean? Was it just an excuse to meet the momentary difficulty? Or had she some subtler purpose? The prince took the latter view.

"Your confidence, madame, is something we may all strive to deserve. Allow me to congratulate you, Monsieur Provost." And he held out his hand.

I took his hand, without meeting his eyes, and mumbled my thanks.

"You are wearied, monsieur?"

"He has not slept for two nights, prince," said Stephanie, making up her story with smiling glibness to cover my embarrassment. "We can well pardon his somewhat disordered looks. After his last great services to your cause, you will have no firmer or more faithful adherent than Monsieur Provost. His whole interests in life are now wrapped up in the cause."

He acknowledged this with another bow, and then asked to see the papers. She handed them to him, and he read them greedily and with an occasional exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

Stephanie pretended to occupy herself with other papers, and I sat watching them both furtively. The die was cast; I had chosen my course, and I had saved my life for the time; but I was weighted by a sense of shame and wretchedness, oppressed, beaten down, overwhelmed by the calamity that had fallen upon me. I was unable to think, and so dazed that the whole terrible scene appeared to have no more actuality than an appalling nightmare.

"You have indeed done well, Monsieur Provost," exclaimed the prince, at length. "First to get all these, and then to bring them safely to us. Permit me to echo madame's expression of confidence. There are those among us who have doubted you, I know; but these, and your deed of to-night, will silence every one—in my hearing, at least."

I had sunk low, indeed, when I could hear this open reference to my supposed commission of murder, and yet utter no protest. But I was conscious of no feeling now, save a maddening

desire to get away and be alone to think; to face things by myself, and seek some ease for the burning torture of my humiliation. But there were still deeper stabs to be endured.

Stephanie looked up from her papers and smiled.

"Ah, prince, the reason for those past doubts of Monsieur Provost is in large part the cause of his present success. So far this has been known only to myself; but you should know it now. Monsieur Provost has often successfully personated Mr. Pershore, even in Belgrade. Have you not been taken for him generally, monsieur?"

"Yes," I said, thinking she merely wished to rivet indissolubly my chains.

But her motive was to be made clear later.

"It was in that character I first knew him, prince. He rendered a great service to our cause in a way that instantly won my confidence and regard. You know that I can read men."

He bowed and spread out his hands.

"Your shrewdness has been amply justified in this case, baroness," he replied, touching the papers.

"I wish him to enjoy your confidence equally and that of the princess."

"Monsieur Provost can rest absolutely assured."

"I am very weary," I broke in, sick to death of the scene.

"Do you not think the princess should have an opportunity of thanking personally one who has rendered her such conspicuous service?"

I tried to catch her eye with a protest, but she avoided me.

The prince rose.

"She is close at hand. I will ask her to come here."

"You might have spared me this last humiliation," I cried indignantly, when he had gone out.

"It is no humiliation, and it is necessary. You must know whom it is you serve, and whom you will ruin if you attempt to break away from us."

I leaned my head on my hands and groaned: "Oh, God!"

"Don't give way, Guy. Listen! I swear to you that I will cause the

strictest inquiry to be made into the circumstances of Provost's death, and if you keep faith with us, you shall be cleared from suspicion of having caused it. I swear that."

"It is too late," I murmured, with a deep sigh.

"If you had only had faith in my warning and fled, all this would have been avoided. Do try to believe now that I have no wish except to be your friend."

"Friendship!" I echoed. "What is that but a part of all this grim mockery?"

"My acts shall make you unsay that, and—my love, Guy," she declared earnestly.

"For Heaven's sake, spare me any such added shame as that implies."

She winced at this, but did not reply. Presently she said, as the door opened:

"Here is the princess."

I rose, and a cry of astonishment escaped my lips.

It was Normia!

At my cry she looked up. She went as pale as death when she recognized me, and pressed her hand to her forehead.

Being alone, I did not realize that she could be the princess, and I went toward her with hands outstretched.

But she shrank from me; doubt and infinite trouble in her eyes, while her look of fear as she glanced at Stephanie made my heart bleed for her.

Then the prince followed, and stared from one to the other of us in quick suspicion and mounting anger.

Stephanie broke the silence.

"Princess Normia is Prince Lepova's promised wife," she said, in a clear, unruffled tone. Then to the prince: "This gentleman once saved Normia from a great danger, prince—saved her life, probably. But she believed him then to be Mr. Pershore, the Englishman, who has just died. That was the service I referred to a minute since. Will you present him now in his real name?"

In a flash I realized the full infernal cunning of the stroke, and that I was

branded as a scoundrel and a murderer in Normia's eyes.

A hot, passionate protest rushed to my lips. But I dared not utter it. I was too fast in the toils. To tell the truth was to court inevitable death. The only possible means of yet saving Normia from the ruin that I now saw threatening her was by tacit compliance in this horrible lie.

With a moan of anguish I hung my head in very shame as the prince was uttering the formal words of presentation.

Then Normia's voice roused me, and I looked up.

"What is your name, monsieur?" she asked, her eyes full on mine, with a wistful, eager light in them, as if—or so it seemed to me—she would only accept my condemnation from myself.

I hesitated, and the other two looked searchingly at me.

There was no escape. The cup of bitterness must be drained to the dregs.

"Gerard Provost, princess," I stammered, my voice low and unsteady. "Always, I trust, your devoted servant."

For an instant she gazed at me, as if she would not believe even my own words against myself. Then, with a start, she drew herself up, bowed coldly, and, placing her hand on the prince's arm, left the room.

I understood. She had passed out of my life forever.

CHAPTER VI.

A LIVING LIE.

Of the events of the week following my cousin's death I have little recollection beyond a blurred sense of nightmare horror and sickening anguish of mind. I know that I must have been close to the border-line of insanity; and that I did not destroy myself was due to nothing but the thought that by living I might yet be able to help Normia.

That even that prevented me has always been a source of marvel to me.

I remained all the time in my rooms,

Provost's rooms, of course, to which I had been directed by Stephanie. I was utterly and abjectly forlorn. I touched scarcely any food, but spent hour after hour, day after day, brooding incessantly upon the fate which had befallen me, and lamenting with the bitterest self-reproach the crass blundering which had wrecked my life.

Everything I cared for in life was gone, nor was there the slightest hope of ever regaining it. The arrangements for accounting for my death were carried out. A supposed operation for appendicitis was performed by Doctor Arnheim, and it was given out that I had not rallied from the anesthetic, and after my funeral had taken place the full account of my death appeared in the newspapers.

I read the accounts myself, pored over them, indeed, with a sort of gruesome fascination, and read other paragraphs about my career—eulogistic references to my services to the government of Servia, together with more or less eloquent regrets that so promising a life had been cut short by the hand of death.

Guy Pershore was dead, and it was Gerard Provost, the spy, the scoundrel, the wastrel vagabond, that read of his death. Doomed to a life of infamy, lies, and bondage, I read and reread the story of my merits and promise, maddened by its irony and suffocated by its shame.

A dozen times a day the revolver-barrel was pressed to my head. My life hung on the whim of the moment, and the trigger would have been pulled and the thing ended but for the thought of Normia.

I abandoned all hope of ever clearing myself from the charge of murder. I could only do that by finding the real assassin, and, although I had one clue—the dagger with which the deed had been done—there was not one chance in a thousand that I could find its owner.

I was chilled and appalled by the sheer impossibility, and resolved to sick-en myself no longer with cheating hopes. And with the abandonment of hope, I began to grow calmer. I ceased

to think of the futility of struggling and to be impotently angered by it. Resignation to the inevitable took its place, and I surrendered myself to face death as a certainty.

I fevered myself no longer by the maddening alternations between hope and despair. It was not a question whether I could escape, but only when I would die. Continue to live as Gerard Provost I would not. Every instinct of my nature rebelled. I should be a paltry scoundrel, a sham, a coward, a living lie; and the shame of the thought heated my blood like a fever.

The one consideration was whether, by playing the part for a few days, I could help to free Normia from the danger that threatened her. I could endure the shame for such a purpose, and I began at last to consider what steps I could take.

But for two days after I had first entertained the thought I shrank from it like a scared child, for one reason, that I should have to meet other people in the character of Provost. I shrank from the actual contact with others with an abhorrence and dread it is impossible to describe.

I had shunned even the woman who brought my food and cleaned my rooms. I sat with the door locked, and would not let her enter the room where I was. Letters and messages came from Stephanie, but the letters I tore up unread, and the messages I would not even suffer to be repeated through the locked door. My meals were only brought in when I had retired to the inner room.

Stephanie herself came twice during the week, but I would not give a sign that I was even alive, until they knocked violently, declaring they would break in the door. Then, with a fierce oath, I swore that I would put a bullet into the head of any one who tried to break in upon my privacy.

In a word, I was all the time on the border-line of insanity, and I should have crossed it, or killed myself, but for the reason I have stated.

Stephanie's second visit was on the last day of that condition of mental

torpor, and it was only a small thing that really roused me.

I had been standing at the window watching the people in the street and wondering when, if ever, I should gather courage to go out among them, and feeling that each one who passed had the thought in his mind that shrinking from sight behind the curtain of my window was a murderer; and as I turned away my eye fell on the wallet in which the papers had been brought from Belgrade.

In an impotent paroxysm of rage I seized it and began to tear it to pieces. I was beside myself with insensate, irresponsible fury, and tore at it as though it were indeed the cause of all my trouble.

Then between the outer leather and the lining I caught sight of a white paper, and wrenching the lining away I saw on the paper the word: "Normia."

No other word; but folded inside were notes for a considerable sum.

I laid both paper and notes on the table and stared at them, with hands pressed to my head as I sought to force my poor, trouble-crazed wits to think out the meaning of it.

I have often smiled in self-pity at the tremendous mental effort it cost me to draw the simple and obvious conclusion that Normia must have given Provost a secret mission to Belgrade, and that this was the answer to it.

But I could not attempt to solve the other questions suggested by the discovery—how there could have been a secret understanding between them; how she could have entrusted such a thing to him, seeing that she had never seen him; what her message to Belgrade could have been, and what so extraordinary a reply meant. All I understood then was that she must be in need of this message and money, and that I would do my utmost to get both to her without delay.

Here was something to do, and it constituted just that impetus to action which I needed. For the first time in all those black days of horror a definite purpose was formed, an actual and prac-

tical step was forced upon me by which I could help Normia.

With the thought of preparing myself to go to her, I went into the bedroom and looked into the mirror. I was a sorry object, indeed. I had not even washed myself in all that week. My beard had sprouted, my hair was matted and tousled, my face drawn and lined, my eyes sunken and shining with an unnatural light. In that one week my face had become that of an old man.

The change had one good result, I thought, with a bitter smile. No one would recognize in such a scarecrow the somewhat dandified Guy Pershore. Nor would any one be looking to find differences between me and Provost.

But the thought that I had found something which I could do for Normia roused me. I bathed and dressed myself carefully, and then, not without a tremor of nervousness, I summoned the woman of the house.

She started and began to tremble violently at sight of me.

"Lord, how you are changed, sir!" she exclaimed.

"I have been very ill, my good woman, but am better," I answered very quietly. "Bring me some food and wine."

"You look so ill; mayn't I fetch a doctor?"

"No, thank you. I am quite myself once more. Tell me who has been for me in the past week."

"Only two have given their names. A Doctor Arnheim, who said he called at the request of Baroness Dolgoroff; and a Herr Andreas Vosbach. A lady called with the doctor yesterday, when they tried to get you to see them. And there was a young woman, like a Greek she seemed to me, who said she had heard that you were dead, sir."

"I am a long way from dead, now; but I was very near it more than once. But bring me the food, and I will show you by eating it that I am very much alive."

I was suddenly conscious of a ravenous hunger, but I was prudent enough to eat and drink sparingly and slowly.

Feeling much refreshed, I went out as soon as it was dusk to buy myself some clothes and get rid of the distressing feeling that I must shrink from my fellow creatures.

For an hour or more I walked about the streets, gradually shaking off the strangeness and conquering the intolerable impression that every one who looked at me was associating me with that gruesome deed in my rooms.

Putting constraint upon myself, I entered a restaurant at last, and sat smoking over a mug of beer, watching the smiling faces, listening to the sallies and loud laughter, with a curious sense of detachment and isolation. It made me melancholy. I envied the laughers, even while I wondered how they could laugh.

But I forced myself to remain until the feeling began to wear away, and at last I even smiled myself at a jest which I overheard from a table close by.

I beckoned a waiter, intending to leave, when from a group behind me I heard a name which I remembered.

"Trust Andreas Vosbach for that," was said, with a chuckle.

It was the name the woman had mentioned as that of one of my callers, and instead of leaving, I ordered another mug of beer, and sat on to listen.

They were discussing some little incident in which a girl was concerned, and this Andreas Vosbach was talking boastfully of what he had done. He impressed me very unfavorably.

They sat long, but as I could not leave without passing their table and so risking recognition by the fellow, I stayed. When they broke up, and I thought they had all gone, I rose. One man remained alone at the table, and when he saw me his eyes lighted with a look of slow recognition and surprise, and he rose and came to me.

"What the devil! Provost! Is it really you? Why, they told me at your rooms you were dying, or something. And you look it, too."

"I have been ill; unnerved and almost out of my mind."

He seized my hand and pressed it,

and, with a glance around to make sure that no one could hear, he whispered:

"I know the reason. We did not believe you had the courage. It will *make* you with them. They will be careful in the future how they jeer at you."

He referred, of course, to the assassination. "I shall take my own line," I answered equivocally.

"Can we go to your rooms? We can't talk here," he said, and I assented.

During the walk I observed that he looked constantly at me, as if noticing my walk, carriage, manner, and general appearance. Something about me perplexed him.

"Why did you grow your beard?" he asked presently.

"Belgrade. The Englishman Pershore had one."

"I never saw him," he said, less truly than he thought. "You've got new clothes."

"I got some ugly stains on the others." It proved an effective reply. He gave a little shudder as he shot a furtive glance at me, and said no more until we were in my rooms and my hat was off.

"Heavens, but you are altered, Provost! Not like the same man," he cried.

"I am not the same man, Vosbach," I answered, with a slow smile. "I shall never be the same man again; at least I shall never again be the man you and others have known. There is a new Gerard Provost, and I have shed for good and all the character as you saw me play it."

I spoke so earnestly and fixed him with such a deliberate stare that he was obviously impressed. He was a full-fleshed, flabby-featured sort of fellow, and his telltale face was easy to read.

"What do you mean about playing the character?"

"That the man you have known was not the real Provost, no more than one of the parts I have had to play in my career as spy. But I have come to my own now."

"I have certainly never seen you in this mood before," he muttered uneasily.

"You will see it often in the future. This deed of mine has made me throw off the old part of coward, and you fellows will have to take me as I am now, or there will be some quarreling. And now to business." I deemed it best to appear to take the lead in whatever he had come to talk about; although, of course, I had not the ghost of an idea what it was.

"It's an infernally rum change in a man," he murmured, as he threw himself back in his chair and stared at me.

"That's enough about myself. I tell you I have been devilishly near losing my wits, and I don't care about the subject."

"All right, only it takes some getting accustomed to."

"Then you'd better hold your tongue until you *are* accustomed to it."

He was inclined to resent this, and sat up quickly and looked at me, but thought better of it, and, with an uneasy laugh, lapsed into silence for some moments. Then he asked, in a nervous, tentative manner: "Does the change mean that you don't intend to go on with us, Provost?"

"In what?"

"About the princess."

I pricked up my ears. "I am the same as ever in regard to that," I said.

"I am glad," he exclaimed, with an air of relief. "Only when you did not come to Grundelhof's to the meeting and wouldn't let me see you when I came here, I couldn't understand. But I see now. What news have you brought from Belgrade? We thought it was all right because Catarina says that Alexandrov is back in Vienna. Will the money be all right?"

"Yes, that's quite certain," I answered, at random. It was all jargon to me. "What have you done in my absence?"

He laughed. "What could we do, man? Particularly as Catarina has been sent away from the Black House. I suppose you know that?"

I was quite at sea, and let the ques-

tion pass with a slow smile of indifference, and a wave of the hand.

"Did you bring the money?" he asked next.

"Little or none; it's to follow in a day or so. You can take it from me that it will be paid to the last coin."

"Good. Then there's nothing to do but settle the actual plan of carrying her off. Are you still resolved to have nothing to do with the actual abduction?"

"It will depend on the plan. Have you any new one?"

"Yes, I thought of one," he replied eagerly. "They guard her like a lynx at the Black House, and now that Catarina is no longer there we might have to wait a devil of a time for a chance. My idea is to choose some night when there's a ball on, and let one of us get a dance with her and lead her out to where Alexandrov would be waiting. He'd do the rest."

"Not a bad plan, Vosbach. What say the others?"

"I can't understand Grundelhof. He and Baumstein suspect you of going back on us, for one thing, and for another he hinted the other night that you had only been brought into the thing because of your influence with Catarina. They seem to have taken me in order to get you; and you, because Catarina might make it easy to get the princess. Of course they daren't throw us over openly, because we know too much. But Grundelhof's a brute."

"I sha'n't let him fool me," I said sternly, wondering who he was.

But my companion only laughed. "It's all right to talk big, but he could eat the two of us. I wouldn't tackle him alone for a fortune."

"Well, we shall see. And now I'm going to send you off. I'm simply crazy for want of sleep."

"You'll come to the next meeting, all right?" he asked as he rose. I nodded, and at the door he turned, and, with a leer, asked: "By the way, what are you going to do about Catarina?"

"Nothing."

He shrugged his fat shoulders, and the leer broadened to a grin. "If she'll

let you, you mean. She's a Greek, don't forget, and you used to be frightened enough of her. She mayn't accept the change in you as easily as the rest of us."

"I can manage my own affairs, Vossbach. Good night."

He gave a long, curious stare as he bade me good night, and with a mystified shake of the head, went away.

I was glad enough that I had let him come home with me and talk. The fact that I had been able to pass myself off with him as Provost was an earnest of success with others. He must have known Provost pretty well; and no doubt the change in my appearance had seemed to him possible as the result of my illness. But it was clear that Stephanie did not know all the people who knew Provost, any more than she knew the undercurrents of intrigue among them.

The thought that I should be engaged in a plot to carry off Normia in the interests of somebody in Belgrade made me smile. But it was, nevertheless, almost providential under the circumstances, as it would enable me to thwart it. But it made it more important than ever that I should get a chance of talking to her and putting her on her guard.

There was, however, one fresh danger ahead now, this Greek girl Catarina, whoever she was. I might impose on the other men as I had imposed on this fellow, but if Provost had been making love to her, she would know the trick the instant her eyes fell on me. And the discovery would lead to Heaven knew what complications. She was in touch with some of the men who believed that I had committed the murder, and they would tell her of the strange likeness, and she would certainly debit me with the murder of the man she loved.

What a Greek girl, mad with rage against the man who had slain her lover, would do I could only leave to my imagination. But the resulting thoughts were not cheering.

What I had to secure was that the complication should not arise before

I had had time to make my effort on Normia's behalf. After that, the deluge.

In that mood I went off to bed and slept as I had not slept the whole week.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HAND OF AN ENEMY.

The following morning found me much clearer in mind and stronger in body. I had now a definite purpose in view, and had decided finally upon my own course so far as my future was concerned.

It was a bright, bracing morning, brilliant with sunshine, just such a morning as makes life seem best worth living; and hitherto I had always been one to rejoice in the sheer glory of the gift of life.

But between my old and my present self there was now a deep, impassable gulf. Life to be enjoyed must be honorable, and for Gerard Provost, the spy, honor was impossible. Such a life I could not and would not endure. Death would be infinitely preferable.

There was still one good thing I could accomplish by living—I could save the woman I loved from those who were seeking her ruin. I would live for that, and for that only. And as soon as that was accomplished I would put an end to my life.

I rose with that resolve fixed unalterably in my mind. Thus at a stroke the whole perspective of life was changed.

I was as a man under sentence of death. For the while I was reprieved; but the reprieve lasted only until I succeeded in my one object. Only the date of death remained to be settled.

Strangely enough, the fact did not in the least depress me. I was never one to rail against fate; and the alternative—to live the life of a scoundrel—was so abhorrent, so infinitely vile a thing in my eyes, that death became the gate of release. Every hour I lived as Provost would be an hour of shame.

I schooled myself sedulously to take

this view—to look on death as honorable, and on life as the reverse. It permeated every thought, and must be at the back of every action.

I was as a man apart from my fellow creatures. The ordinary purposes, motives, and inspiration, of average men, were no longer of the least account to me. And what they would regard as dangers would no longer touch me in the slightest.

I did not underestimate the perils of my hazardous position. But the man under sentence of death, and prepared to welcome it at whatever hour it might come and whatever form it might take, has but little to ruffle his nerves. My only fear now was lest death should come before I had accomplished my purpose.

In this respect, the action of the girl Catarina became all-important; and I found a letter from her that morning. It was temperately worded, but under the surface it was easy to read a strong will. She reproached me for not having been to her since my return; asked why I had refused to see her when she had been to my rooms; told me that she had left the Black House and was living with her mother; and wound up with a demand to know when I intended to keep the pledge I had so often given her.

She gave no address, so I presumed that Provost had known where the mother lived. It was a profoundly unpleasant episode altogether. The other embarrassments I had inherited from Provost were quite troublesome enough without this love entanglement; and as it was my one object to avoid meeting her, I destroyed the letter, and told the woman of the house to deny me to her should she make another attempt to see me. If she persisted in this, I could gain further time by a change of lodgings.

In the meantime I had other affairs to consider. In the first place, there was the consideration of how I was to play the part for which I had been cast so unwillingly. I had told Vosbach overnight that the deed I was supposed to have committed had changed me;

and my illness would lend color to that. A man whose nerves are believed to have broken down could readily get others to believe him a little insane. I had seen the thought in Vosbach's eyes more than once during my assumption of swagger, and I resolved to act with enough eccentricity to promote such a belief in others.

I had a chance that morning of trying the effect of such a course. I was preparing to start for the Black House with the object of ascertaining how to get word with Normia, when the woman of the house told me that Doctor Arnheim wished to see me. I had him up at once.

My attitude toward him, as toward so much else, had changed as the result of my new resolve. It had become impersonal. He was but one of the many tools I must use in the prosecution of my purpose. So I offered him my hand.

He was surprised, having evidently been in doubt as to the reception he would get.

"You are better, then?" he said.

"I am almost myself. My nerves broke down."

"You should have let me see you."

"I should probably have killed you. I was on the verge of insanity, and had the homicidal instinct strongly. This thing was scarcely ever out of my hand." And I took my revolver from my pocket, and glinted at him out of the corner of my eye.

He started uneasily.

"You'd better be careful with that," he said hastily.

I smiled.

"Don't be scared. I know how to use it. Turn a trifle to one side, and I'll shave off the ends of your waxed mustache to a nicety," and I leveled it as if in readiness. The action suggested insanity to him.

"I'd rather take your skill on trust," he exclaimed, with a nervous laugh, as he shrank back and put up his hand.

"Ah! you have no right to have nerves," I said contemptuously, as I tossed the weapon down on the table.

"And now, what do you want with me?"

"Baroness Dolgoroff wished me to see you. She is very anxious about you. After this assass—" He pulled up short, as I turned sharply on him. "After this visit of yours to Belgrade you stand pretty high in her favor."

"I should think I do," I replied boastfully. "And not in hers only. You have reason enough to be glad of that. But for her, you and I would have been playing with these things in earnest." I picked up the revolver again with a meaning smile. "I'll show you what sort of a chance you'd have had. See that photograph? I'll amputate that left hand." Without appearing to take careful aim, I fired at a photograph on the other side of the room, and then showed him that I had put the bullet exactly where I had said.

He was profoundly uncomfortable.

"A splendid shot," he muttered uneasily. "But there is no reason why we should quarrel, Provost. It was I who covered up the tracks of that business a week ago."

"Tell me all about it," I exclaimed, with a laugh.

He did so at considerable length, and I was careful to learn the names of all who were concerned in it. His manner of telling it and the references to his own risk suggested that he was very anxious to keep my good-will.

I tossed him a word of praise somewhat contemptuously.

"You've done that infernal bit of villainy cleverly enough, doctor; but if the truth ever comes out, you'll have to answer for your share in it."

The words angered him.

"If it comes to villainy—" But my fingers closed round the revolver, and he stopped abruptly.

"Doctor Arnheim, we'd better understand one another. I don't allow any man to refer to any supposed acts of mine as villainy."

"You used the word yourself."

"I applied it to you. That makes all the difference. And if you choose to regard it as an insult, well—" And I shrugged my shoulders, having put

all the contempt I could express into the words and manner. I acted the bully intentionally. I wished to make him afraid of me. He would talk to the rest.

As he believed that single-handed I had committed a cold-blooded murder, he regarded me as dangerous. His eyes dropped before mine, and he let the thing pass in silence. After a pause he said:

"The baroness wishes to see you." And he rose.

"Then we'll go there together at once."

"I have an engagement. I am sorry."

"It will have to wait, doctor. I wish you to accompany me. And as I stand so high in the baroness' favor, for the future you will please do as I wish."

"You are very strange, Provost," he exclaimed, flushing.

"Some people might call it mad; but you can call it what you like, and think it what you like. But you and others will find it easiest to do what I say without kicking. I have a method of my own for kickers." And with that we started.

I had another purpose beside a desire to swagger in making him accompany me. I was so ignorant of the ways of the Black House that I should not know where to go or what to do when I reached it. I needed him as a guide, therefore.

When we reached the house I observed that a very strict watch was kept upon all who entered. The doctor was known, of course; but my name was asked, the business which brought me, and the person whom I wished to see. All these details were, as I discovered afterward, entered in a carefully kept register. Nor was any one allowed to pass until he had been made free of the house by the order of Stephanie or Lepova.

I chose to take umbrage at this, and used it to make a little demonstration. I singled out the man who was in charge of the hall arrangements and picked a quarrel with him for some faults I affected to find. I followed

this up by publicly giving Arnheim such directions as would let those around understand that my authority was superior to his.

"You lose no time in asserting your authority," he said, nettled by the act.

"It is my way," I rapped back brusquely. "Those who don't like it can tell me."

"A way that will make plenty of enemies, too," he retorted.

"I came here to see the baroness, not to discuss my conduct." And I fell back a step that he might lead the way, for I did not know where to go, of course.

"Most of us wait here and send up to ask if she can receive us," he said dryly, stepping into a side room; "but perhaps you can dispense with that formality."

"That is more to my liking," I replied. I instantly resolved to take his jibe as earnest, and, putting my finger on the bell, held on until a servant came hurrying in. "Take me to the baroness' rooms and announce me—Monsieur Provost."

The servant was not more surprised than Arnheim, and stared at me as though I were a madman.

"You have an appointment, monsieur?"

"You will soon have none here if you question me," I cried sternly and with a very angry frown. "Doctor Arnheim, I shall need you no more. Good day. Now, you, lead the way at once."

My manner frightened the fellow's hesitation out of him, and he led me up the stairway to the room where I had seen Stephanie when at the house before. Another servant was in the ante-room, and was for stopping me, although he admitted that his mistress was disengaged.

I took a short cut to my purpose, therefore. I shouldered both men out of my way, opened the door, and was walking in unannounced, when one of them ran up behind me and called out my name.

He held the door open long enough to see that my welcome was very cor-

dial, and that Stephanie came toward me with both hands outstretched. I used the occasion to impress the men.

"Don't forget yourself again," I said sternly, and stared at them until they shut the door.

By this means I managed also to evade Stephanie's outstretched hands. She let them fall slowly with a suggestion of passing embarrassment and asked: "Is it really you, Guy?"

"No, baroness. It is Monsieur Gerard Provost, a very different person from any one you have ever associated with me."

She drew back a step, looked at me shrewdly, and her embarrassment passed in a laugh. "I see I must be careful with you," she replied, with mock seriousness. "You are theatrical, even in your entrance. Do you know that you are the only man of all about here who would have dared to force a way to me thus?"

"The word has ceased to have much meaning for me," I replied, with a shrug.

"A swashbuckling mood that, surely; and not in the least natural to you."

"Natural enough to Monsieur Provost, believe me."

She laughed and shook her head. "Oh, no, indeed. To tell the truth, he was rather a coward. But never mind the mood. I am so relieved to see you that the mood doesn't matter. Only yesterday I was told at your house —"

"Monsieur Provost's house, remember, please," I interjected.

"That you were still desperately ill. And you are really recovered? Oh, I cannot tell my delight."

"You may modify your delight when you learn what my recovery may mean to you."

"Oh, no. My delight on that account is not to be restrained. It is spontaneous, right from my heart. You have not been out of my thoughts once the whole week. The suspense has nearly killed me." She contrived to convey, more by her manner than in her words, that she refused to take seriously the attitude I assumed.

"Then, perhaps, you will tell me what steps you have taken in your zeal to clear the name I once bore from the charge of murder?"

"How could I do anything without you?" she cried, as if reproaching my unreasonableness. "But every breath of suspicion has been removed from you publicly."

"Arnheim told me. But do you propose to unearth the truth, and if so, how?"

She did not reply immediately, but moved back to the table and stood fingering some papers thoughtfully. When she looked up again, her eyes showed that she had taken some fresh purpose. Then she smiled. "Why do you assume this stern, almost truculent manner with me? Of course it is only assumption. You see I know you, and am not in the least alarmed."

"You have forced the part on me, I choose the way I shall play it. That's all."

"And begin by forcing your way in here, destroying my authority with my servants and trampling on whatever orders were given to them?"

"Matters are too serious for me to care a straw for the etiquette with which you surround yourself. I go my own way."

"A very bold and important Monsieur Provost," she laughed. "And when you entered I offered you my hand, and you refused it, under cover of rating the servant."

"I do not choose to take the hand of an enemy."

"Theatrical again!" she exclaimed, arching her brows, and then repeated my words with the exaggerated air of the heavy stage villain: "The hand of an enemy."

"You have the means of clearing my name. If you will not do it, shall I regard you as a friend?"

She laughed again. "That is surely Guy Pershore for a moment." I tossed up my hands, as if it were immaterial. "And how should I answer you, then? Should I throw myself into a pose and implore you not to doubt me, and give off a string of impassioned vows of

friendship? Or should I be common sense and commonplace, perhaps, and just tell you not to be so ridiculously dramatic?"

She spoke with an indulgent air, as if wishful to humor me, but all the time I could see that she was carefully considering how to say what she had evidently resolved should be said.

"It will be quite enough if you will simply answer my question and say plainly whether you intend to clear my name."

"You are not very difficult to read, Guy," she said irrelevantly. "You did not come here to ask me that question. You are not the man to go running to any woman for help in what you can do yourself. Tell me first why have you come?"

"To see Normia."

Her eyes snapped with sudden anger.

"There is no Normia to you. To Gerard Provost she is the princess, the affianced wife of Prince Lepova."

"To see the Princess Normia, then."

"She knows you only as Gerard Provost, who once masqueraded as Guy Pershore—and she must never know the truth. There is only one person in the world who can be trusted with your secret. Your pledge to me prevents your telling it to her. You understand that?"

"I shall not break my pledge. I can see her without doing that."

"You shall see her—but only in my presence," she declared, after a pause.

"I see you trust me," I sneered.

"You need not try to wound me with sneers. I am the only person in the world who can be trusted with your secret—until the truth is discovered; and yet you will not even consider me a friend. Not even a friend! And I have given you my whole heart, and am the only one who can help you to clear your name! Do you think I do not find that hard?"

She was now intensely earnest, and spoke with much feeling.

"Do you mean to do it?"

"Yes. On my honor, yes, if I have to betray every follower of the cause—aye, even the very cause itself, and if

it costs me all I care for in life. And I can do it, Guy; I know I can." She paused a second, and then, with the color mantling her cheeks and her eyes shining, she added: "But I will not stir so much as a finger until I am—your wife."

CHAPTER VIII.

GERARD PROVOST, THE SWASH-BUCKLER.

I think that Stephanie looked for a strong outburst of feeling from me in response to her startlingly frank declaration, but I merely smiled, and asked:

"Is it not you who are theatrical now?"

"No—unless it is theatrical to state the truth bluntly."

"An unusual truth, at any rate."

"I have not forgotten what passed in the old days at Belgrade," she said significantly.

"It will profit neither of us to remember that."

"Ah! but I cannot forget."

I shrugged my shoulders, and the gesture angered her.

"Why should I?" she cried. "You made me love you then, and must be true to what you said. I was tied then. I am free now, and I claim your promises."

"Be at least just to the man you have killed," I replied firmly. "We met, talked, danced, and laughed together; we flirted, if you will; but in neither act nor word did I ever forget you were a married woman. If you will tell me of one, I will take up this challenge and make you my wife."

"You made me love you, and I will not give you up," she insisted, and her eyes glowed as she bent them upon me. She was the absolute mistress of a hundred moods, and her present one was passion, intensely real or excellently simulated.

"Can we not discuss this with a little less feeling?" I asked.

She crossed to me with a low laugh, and laid her hand on my shoulder.

"Am I so hateful to you, Guy?"

"I did not come prepared to propose marriage, baroness, and that's the truth. Nor do I think it would be anything of a success," I answered lightly.

The tone jarred, and she frowned.

"Did you come with a realization of how absolutely you are in my power, and how impossible it is for you to clear yourself without my help?"

"You can give your help as a friend."

"And live to see another woman in your arms! It is not thus we women of the East love. Fate has given you to me, Guy."

I met her earnestness with a laugh.

"In my present plight I'm only a low grade of lottery prize. You've no great reason to thank fate. Nor can I pretend to offer you any—any such feeling as you might desire. For the life of me I can't see what you expect to gain."

"Can't you? Ah, Guy!" and she smiled, looking, I am bound to confess, very happy and very radiant, supremely handsome, and, in my eyes, supremely devilish. But then I detested her for the use she was making of her power over me.

"Never mind the sentiment," I said bluntly. "You say you can and will clear my name if I will marry you. But if I decline?"

"You cannot. I alone know your secret. If you broke with me you would have to answer to the rest. No power on earth could then save your life."

"You mean you would tell them?"

For a second she flinched from this direct question; then met it firmly.

"Yes, I mean that. As there is nothing I will shrink from to clear your name when I share it, so there is nothing I would not do to revenge myself."

"Forcible wooing, anyway," I said dryly. "And these others—your friends or followers, or whatever you call them—what will they say to your betrothal to a low-down, rascally scamp and spy such as Gerard Provost?"

"Do you think I care—I, who know the truth? Besides, for the present they will not be told. The needs of the cause demand secrecy for a while."

"Explain, please."

"There is a ball here to-night; come to it, and you will see for yourself. A man of great influence is to be present, and he must not yet be estranged."

I coughed suggestively.

"I understand. You hold him by the ties of attraction, eh? You are a very beautiful woman, Stephanie, and he won't have much chance. Poor devil! Who is he?"

"Baron Von Epstein," she replied, with a smile. I believe she liked my equivocal reference to her beauty.

"A big fish to catch in the conspiracy net," I said. I knew of him well enough. "Then our little compact is to be a secret from everybody, eh?"

"With one exception—Normia."

"And why Normia?"

She threw her head back and laughed.

"Because I wish it. Call it my personal vanity, if you will. I shall be very proud of you, Guy."

"Exactly. And the real reason?"

She hesitated, and then nodded.

"Yes, you may know it. It is policy. Normia believed in you once, in your capacity to do things—that was in Guy Pershore. She would not believe that *he* could ever be forced to marry me, and this will destroy any lingering doubt. If she believed in you, she might try to get your help to avoid this marriage with the prince; and I know you well enough to believe that that might be dangerous."

I was careful not to let my face indicate my opinion of this, for she eyed me very keenly. I gave a shrug and a short laugh, and replied in the same half-flippant manner.

"If she doesn't wish to marry the man, why doesn't she just bid him good day?"

"Why don't you bid me good day?" The words were not out of her mouth before she regretted them, and sought to cover the mistake. "The reason is obvious; she understands the responsibilities of her high position and accepts them."

"And that's why you fear she would seek my help to get out of them," I returned. "You made a little slip there,

Stephanie. But never mind. By the way, though, hadn't you better cultivate the habit of calling me something else than Guy?" I asked, to get away from the subject. "I'm not very particular; but, seeing that I murdered the man, it's scarcely nice taste to take his name, is it?" I rose as I spoke, suppressed a yawn, and laughed lightly.

"Do you still care for Normia?" She flashed the question at me suddenly.

I answered very leisurely:

"I do trust that in addition to the other circumstances of our exceedingly unusual betrothal, you are not going to add the uncomfortable complication of jealousy. If you feel that you can't trust me, it will save an infinity of trouble just to ring for your head assassin and let him give me the happy despatch on this red rug here. It wouldn't even spoil the color; and I promise not to squeal."

Her face darkened, and she grew almost passionately earnest.

"Are you merely acting with me?"

"Of course I am. Do be reasonable. Haven't you told me off for this spy's part, and now tacked on this betrothal business? As I'm one of the principals in the comedy—or tragedy, whichever it is—surely I may give my own impression of the part. Much more my line of work to play it as a comedy part, I assure you."

"You had better beware," she cried, with a quick gesture of anger.

I smiled.

"That's how the heavy villainess talks. I'm not going to 'beware,' or anything of the sort. As for Normia, if she means to marry Prince Lepova, I am not going to murder him in order to stop her. You are too extravagant in your views. And now, have you any orders? Any murders or spying on the kitchen slate? Do I call every day for orders?"

"Are you seeking to fool me with your jibes, or merely to anger me?"

"A little of both, I think. If we don't quarrel, we shall only bore one another prodigiously. By the way, what should I call you—baroness or

Stephanie, or what? And am I to kiss you? And if so, on the cheek or the lips or the fingers? You're running this, you know."

Her eyes sparkled dangerously. "I will make you view this seriously and turn those jeers to earnest."

"I shall watch the process with deep interest. I assure you. And now, au revoir, Stephanie." I emphasized her name with exaggeration and laughed. "I'd stay longer, but Gerard Provost has no dress clothes, and I must go and buy some."

She let me get nearly to the door, and then called me.

"Guy!"

"I really don't think 'Guy' is safe," I said, turning back slowly. "Suppose you call me Popsy or Spy or Fido or Murderer, or any little pet name of the sort?"

"Oh, don't!" she cried almost fiercely, stamping her foot.

"You're a very unreasonable woman, Stephanie," I said as I went to the door again.

"Come back, Guy."

"No, I sha'n't come back to be 'don't-ed' in that tone. Till to-night." And, with that, I walked out of the room.

I was by no means dissatisfied with the result of the interview. I had got at some of her plans, while keeping my own to myself. As for the betrothal, I could just laugh at it. It would come to nothing, and the flippant, bantering manner I had adopted would blunt the point of any attempt at serious love-making on her part.

It was not impossible that I might even laugh her out of any imaginary infatuation. Love has no enemy so keen and deadly as ridicule, and it should be my fault if the farcical side of this thing was not always on the surface.

In the meantime I had scored one important point. I should see Normia that night, and have a chance of delivering to her the letter I had found in Provost's wallet; and perhaps find an opportunity of speaking to her on other matters.

I looked forward with the keenest anticipation to the meeting with her. I was prepared, of course, to find her very antagonistic to me. Stephanie had calculated rightly enough the probable effect of the betrothal upon Normia, and I was ready to gnash my teeth at the cunning with which the barriers between us were being piled up.

Nor was it likely that at the ball I should have much chance of talking privately with Normia. Stephanie's eyes would be on us the whole time, and no doubt she would put the prince on his guard, also. Still, I was not in a mood to be easily checked, and as I entered the house for the ball, I was resolved to force matters with a strong hand, if only I should find Normia herself ready to listen.

Intentionally I maintained the same air of rather insolent swagger. I acted as though the deed with which I was credited had turned my head. I had dressed myself with scrupulous care, and when I had swaggered up the broad staircase I waited at the door of the room where Stephanie was receiving until there was a comparative lull in the hubbub, when I made the man bawl out my name at the top of his lung power.

Many heads were turned in my direction as I went up to Stephanie.

Baron Von Epstein—a red-headed, fiery little person, with bold, insolent eyes—was in close attendance upon her, and as I bent over her hand, which I held a good deal longer than etiquette required, I murmured two or three phrases to the accompaniment of ardent looks, which I knew would stir his jealousy.

It was a good beginning. After a moment or two, during which I had the satisfaction of seeing that she was exceedingly uncomfortable, he pushed forward to claim her attention. I behaved with abominable rudeness. I gave him a very stony, impertinent stare, and asked, in a tone loud enough for some of those about us to hear:

"Who is this—person?"

"Baron Von Epstein, let me present Monsieur Provost, one of the stanchest

adherents of our cause," said Stephanie quickly, coloring with vexation.

He stared at me, and I murmured: "Delighted," and immediately turned my back on him and went on talking to her.

But she cut me short. "You must excuse me now, monsieur. The baron was telling me something I would not miss for the world." And then I found myself at liberty to make the round of the rooms in search of Normia.

How many of those present knew me I could not even guess, of course, nor did it trouble me much; I had become absolutely indifferent to the risks of being recognized; and I sauntered from one room to the other with a lordly air as if the whole place belonged to me.

But to my dismay Normia was not present; and when presently I saw Prince Lepova I resolved to ask him if she was coming. He was the center of a little group, and in conformity with my conception of my great personal importance, I pushed my way through the people, and said familiarly: "Good evening, prince."

"Ah, Monsieur Provost, good evening," he replied, somewhat distantly. He was apparently none too well pleased at my greeting.

"So her highness, the princess, does not honor us to-night?"

"On the contrary, monsieur, she has been present, and will return," he replied rather curtly.

"I am glad," I said indulgently, as though graciously bestowing my approval upon the arrangement. "I shall be happy to meet her again."

"Indeed," he rapped back, thinking to snub me.

But I stared at him steadily, and replied in a tone of studied insolence:

"Yes, indeed, Monsieur le Prince. May I ask if you have any objection?"

My impertinence brought two little spots of color to his cheeks, and he bit his lip. But he smothered his anger. "No, monsieur; none, of course."

"Then it is a pity you should so address me as to imply to those about us that there was," I retorted, and with-

out waiting for his answer, I turned on my heel.

Doctor Arnheim was standing with two or three other men close by, and heard this. I saw them glance at one another with shrugs and smiles, and the doctor came up and bade me good evening.

I glanced down at him superciliously and waved him away. "I have no commands for you to-night, doctor. You can stay with your friends." And I sauntered on as he rejoined the men, looking bitterly mortified and not a little discomfited by the sally of laughter with which they greeted him.

It was, however, good policy for me to keep every one at a distance, and as to the means by which I could best accomplish that result, I was indifferent. That they should look upon me as a swashbuckling braggart was nothing to me.

Presently Stephanie, flushed and angry, came up to me. "Are you mad that you seek to make enemies on all sides?" she exclaimed.

"I am not very particular. What is the matter?"

"First you insulted Baron Von Epstein, and then the prince. That is very much the matter, indeed."

I smiled. "Of course I'm jealous of the baron. What else? As for the prince, he tried to snub me. Would you have Gerard Provost, the man you are honoring with your hand, take a snub from a third-rate prince, my dear Stephanie?"

"You will ruin everything," she cried.

"No more than returning the compliment paid to Guy Pershore. I am naturally elated over my betrothal, and really must get all the enjoyment I can out of it."

And at that she flung away from me with an exclamation of anger.

I resumed my tour of the rooms and was standing close to one of the conservatories when Normia came out of it on the arm of a man. My pulses leaped at the sight of her, but I had myself well in hand, and when she saw me I bowed.

I feared that she would avoid me, but

to my surprise she returned the bow, and after one or two nervous glances about her, she said something to the man, took her hand from his arm, and came toward me.

It became very difficult for me to retain my composure.

"I—I wish to speak to you, Monsieur Provost," she said. She trembled and stumbled over the name.

"You honor me, princess," I replied loud enough for those about us to hear. "Will you walk with me down the room?"

"I—I mean privately."

"Believe me, it will be safer not to leave this crowded room."

Her glance of suspicion told me that she half-thought I wished to avoid any private conversation. But I took no notice, and as we turned down the room I began to talk of the heat and the crush and so on. She replied in monosyllables, and was so obviously uneasy that I gave her a word of caution.

"Many eyes are on us. I beg you play your part as though this were merely a casual conversation. I also have much to say to you."

"Did you bring nothing for me from Belgradé, monsieur?" she asked, after a few moments.

I saw Stephanie and the prince watching us from a distance. I laughed as if at some jest of hers, and waved my hand about the room, as I replied: "I have a paper for you. If you will drop your handkerchief I will give it you."

A moment later she dropped the handkerchief, and with the paper folded in my hand I stooped to pick it up.

"Permit me," said a voice. It was Lepova. He had come up with Stephanie on his arm, and reached out to recover the handkerchief.

"You will scarcely rob me of the choice to render the princess this trifling service," I said quickly, as I picked it up. Then, holding his eyes on mine that he might not see what I was about, I crushed the paper into the handkerchief and returned it, with a bow, to Normia.

As I stood up, I met Stephanie's eyes.

Normia was very confused, and obviously much afraid of them both. She changed color, bowed to me, and with a murmured "Thank you, monsieur," went off on the prince's arm, just as Von Epstein came up to Stephanie, much to my relief.

Had either of them seen anything?

TO BE CONTINUED.



THE SHARERS

IT was an amateur dramatic performance, and the audience was bearing up bravely; but toward the end the fortitude of the gathering was broken down.

It happened when Mr. Smithson, the grocer's young man, who was playing the hero, rushed on and embraced Miss Mathews, the heroine. Mr. Smithson had not yet attained the dignity of a mustache, and he wore a false one.

"My darling," he said, imprinting a chaste salute on the fair girl's lips, "now we will pull together, and share and share alike."

Then it was that the audience laughed, and when Smithson saw Miss Mathews he understood why.

He had been a little overanxious to commence "sharing," for he had left half the false mustache on the fair heroine's upper lip.

The Mine War

By Charles Francis Bourke

In which is told the unique experience of a silver-miner in Colorado who stumbled accidentally upon a gigantic plot and risked his life to frustrate it. A story of uncommon strength; picturesque, vivid, and thought-compelling



WO minutes after the messenger had pounded on the door of his bunk-house Jim Railey was striding up the mountain road to the office of the Silver King Mine.

There was a light in the manager's room, in the small frame building, and when Railey entered, in response to the manager's call, he found the latter standing by the table in the center of the room, examining a large blue-print of the mine workings, in the light of a lamp which swung from the ceiling.

"There's trouble in the air, Railey," the manager said abruptly. "I sent for you because I think I can trust you, anyway. I wish I could say as much for the others."

"I guess you know whether you can or not, Mr. Barton," the engineer returned, with a grim smile.

The manager nodded. He was a big, ruddy-faced, square-jawed man, dressed, like Railey, in canvas mining-clothes. In the top of one of his heavy mining-boots were thrust three or four candles—the working sign of the Colorado silver-miner—and he was following the tracings of the Silver King's tunnels and drifts with the point of a miner's candlestick—a stiletto-like strip of steel, with a loop for the candle in the hilt.

Marking a point on the map by transfixing it upon the table with the implement, the manager again turned to his tall, keen-eyed subordinate, who, erect and patient as a soldier, awaited his orders.

"Remember how we first met, Jim?" he asked curtly.

"Do I, Mr. Barton!" Across Jim Railey's mind flashed a recollection of himself as he had been six months before, when he had wandered into Leadville, the little mining city in the heart of the Rockies, after a reckless, precarious existence which had carried him from one end of the great West to the other—from the gold-fields of Nevada to the snow-covered "finds" of Thunder Mountain; from the Bad Lands of Arizona to the ice-sheeted workings of the Klondike.

On the night that he had first met Barton he had tempted fortune in "The Alhambra," Leadville's glittering gambling-hell. His last dollar had passed over the green cloth, and he had settled back in his chair and drawn the last cigarette from his case to secure a momentary consolation. At any rate, he had risked all like a gentleman! Then he remembered Barton's stern face bending over him, with something like admiration in the hard eyes, the whispered proffer, the place in the mines, and the friendship that followed.

"I guess you ought to know from that whether you can bank on me or not," Railey went on, as the vision passed.

"I didn't mean it that way," the manager interposed. "I told you then the chance might come to wipe out what you seemed to consider an obligation. Well, it's right next door. See yonder?"

He pointed to three or four flat cases in the corner of the room.

"Winchester rifles and Colt revolv-

ers. The Chrysolite Mine people, above us here on the trail, are getting ready to break into our workings in the Silver King. They're going to jump us."

"By George!"—Railey shot one big fist into the palm of his other hand—"that's what that blackguard Tom Oakley was hinting about the other night! But I didn't think they were working so close, Mr. Barton."

"Their main drift is not more than three days off, if that. They're following a vein right into our main tunnel, and they've got a gang of thugs down there ready to rush us when they break the hole through into the Silver King. That's the reason for the Winchesters." The manager lifted the top of one of the boxes and took out a rifle. "Slip this under your coat when you go, and have it handy in the engine-house; they may try to jump the top works when they break through into the mine."

"You can count on me to take care of the engine-house," the engineer said grimly. "But how about you, down below, Mr. Barton?"

"I've got Peters and the other guards in the drift now, where the Chrysolite will break through; besides, the steam-pipes are connected right up into the drift."

"You mean the new pump-pipes we connected with the boiler yesterday?"

"That's a bluff for the benefit of the curious. There's no need for a pump in that drift, but the pipes are connected all the way from the boiler, down the shaft and along the tunnel. When those Chrysolite mine-jumpers break through into us we'll give them hot steam for their bullets." The manager's eyes twinkled.

"By the Lord Harry, that's the stuff to give them!" the engineer cried delightedly. "I come in on that act, too."

"There's only one thing more, Jim," the manager said, laying his hand on the other's shoulder. "There's a sort of Molly Maguire clique here, and those fellows are after me. A charge of powder set off in Seventeen stope last night just missed me by a hair. There are traitors in our own camp—and

worse. We're up against a tough proposition, but we'll down them if you'll look after the top while I see to the bottom. Now, is there anything more to say?"

"If they get you, Mr. Barton, they'll do it over me," Railey returned between his clenched teeth. "And if they fool around the engine-house, there'll be a funeral."

"Good! Take that rifle with you, and be at the lever yourself to-morrow when I go down. I may go down to-night while things are quiet, but after to-morrow trust nobody. Now, Railey, off you go, and finish your sleep. I think, between us, we'll hold the Silver King!"

Their hands met in a quick, close grip, and the engineer turned to the door. He knew from experience the manager was a man of few words, not given to discussion when orders were once laid down.

When Jim Railey left the manager's office, the moon had topped the Eastern range, and he could see Leadville, a smoky smudge, far down in the valley. The mine buildings were only a few hundred yards up the trail; he saw the lights of the engine-house and shaft-house, and could hear the chugging of the mine-pumps and the whirl of the hoisting-engine as the bucket was drawn up the perpendicular shaft, one hundred and fifty feet deep. Then came the rattle of the ore as the bucket was dumped into the iron tram-car, and against the sky-line he saw the lander pushing the car out along the elevated tramway that spanned the road, from the shaft-house to the ore-bins.

"It's a little late," Railey muttered to himself, "but I may as well go and see what Oakley's up to. He's pretty foxy, too, I'm thinking! Probably in on this Chrysolite business."

He had left the rifle on a ledge of rocks outside when he stepped into the engine-house through a side door. Oakley, his assistant engineer, was at the lever of the big hoisting-drum letting the wire rope run out as the bucket dropped down the shaft. Railey stopped beside him.

"Everything going all right?" he asked.

"That fool Swede bucket-lander dropped a rock down the shaft last night," Oakley growled. "Laid out a pump for an hour or so, but I fixed it. Don't s'pose you came over to relieve me, this time o' night, did you?" he added impudently.

"Hardly," Railey returned good-naturedly. "Just couldn't sleep. Thought I'd come over and see if the boilers are steaming any better than they did to-day." His keen eye had caught the fireman beckoning to him from the far end of the building. He sauntered back to the fire-hole.

"What is it, Tommy?" he asked, lowering his voice.

"Two o' them gun-fighters from the Chrysolite been hanging around here," the fireman whispered quickly. "Oakley went down the mine, to the pump, *he* said. He was gone over an hour. When he came up he went to foolin' round No. 2 boiler; I found a loose plug up there after, an' pounded it down ag'in—'ware fox!"

The assistant engineer was sauntering back toward the fire-hole when Railey met him half-way.

"Boilers O. K.," he said cheerfully, noting the suspicious glance of the other. "I'm going down to take a look at those pumps, by the way, before the men quit at twelve. Hold the bucket when it comes up, will you?"

Oakley took the lever again with a black face. When the bell rang from below Railey went out into the shaft-house and waited until the six-foot bucket rose through the mouth of the shaft and was emptied. As it swung back into the black hole he stepped on to the vail, or iron handle to which the long wire rope was made fast, and, holding on to the rope, to maintain his position, was dropped slowly into the wet and dripping shaft. Far above him, in a moment, the top of the shaft had narrowed to a small square of light, and, looking downward over the edge of the bucket, he saw, like glowworms, the lights of the miners' candles at the bottom. In one corner of the shaft

two black, reeking steam-pipes were bolted to the planking.

"One of 'em is Mr. Barton's new pump-pipe," he chuckled. "By George! that's a corking scheme, fighting those mine-jumpers with live steam. They won't think the Silver King's healthy to stay in."

The big bucket began to slow up in the descent.

"We're nearing the bottom. It's wet enough down here. I wish I'd brought a rubber coat; I'll get rheumatism. Here we are!" The bucket jarred slightly as it reached the bottom.

As he jumped off, two men dragged the empty bucket to one side and hooked the wire cable to the handle of a filled bucket which stood ready to go up. Railey waited until the cable tightened, creaked, and the bucket swung clear, steadied by the men until it cleared the timbers of the bottom drift.

"Lend me some candles and a candlestick, Tom," he said to one of the men. "I'm going up the drift a ways. How many men are working to-night?"

The miner, a Cornishman, replied in the broad speech of his kind. "There be awe th' la-ads workin' an' there be some fightin' lads up in Thirteen stope." He grinned. "Reckon on th' master expects some bra-akin' in doe'n't he, zurr?"

"Suppose there is trouble, what will you fellows do?" Railey asked curiously.

"If be th' Chrysolite people sends lads through wi' guns, we lads'll go up yon shaft an' take dinner," the man returned stolidly. "Oakley man up yon came down here an' went talkin' wi' our fightin' lads," he added. "Shall you go there, too? I'll show 'e th' wa-ay, before we quit. We stops work middle o' night Satterday."

Declining the guide, Railey turned into the black tunnel, following the line of the steam-pipe, which ran overhead, bolted to the timbers of the roof. Far away ahead of him he heard the dull reverberations of blasting-powder, used by the miners in breaking out the silver ore. He knew that the tunnels ran

for miles in all directions underground, branching off into innumerable smaller tunnels, drifts, or stopes, as the miners burrowed after the tortuous veins of silver.

As he made his way through the mysterious gloom, the tunnel widened out at places into chambers or rooms; and in one of these rooms four or five miners were waiting, smoking.

"Stop here," one said. "Fire's yon!"

A dull boom followed the remark, and the crash of falling rock. As the men filed off in another direction, he went on his way, keeping watch on the overhead line of pipe. When the drift lowered, he splashed through water to his ankles, and when it raised from the level, he clambered over the broken rock that covered the floor.

He had begun to think there would be no end to the lonely journey, and was making his way cautiously through a narrow place in the drift when he heard somewhere in the darkness ahead of him the sound of voices. The last squad of miners had told him there was no ore-working in this direction. When he looked up at the roof of the mine again he saw the end of the black pipe. This, then, was as far as the manager had run it; the danger-point could not be far off! He caught the murmur of voices again, and went on carefully, avoiding noise. A few yards farther on the drift took a sharp turn to the left and upward. Peering around the corner, he first perceived a glimmer of candlelight, and then saw something that made his heart stand still.

"By George! The Chrysolite's through!" he murmured. "There's some crooked business here; those fellows are talking through the opening. It must have come down during the early night!"

Again he cautiously projected his head around the corner of the drift. When his eyes had become accustomed to the dim light he saw clearly, and heard, what was going on, and he gritted his teeth.

A jagged hole, some four or five feet in diameter, had been broken

through the rock from the adjoining mine. From the blackness he could make out that there was nobody on the far side of the hole—either miners or guards. But he soon discovered what had happened. Seven or eight men were crowded on a sort of platform on the near side of the connecting hole, and from the light of the candles stuck in the sides of the drift he saw that three or four of these men were guards he knew to be employed by the Chrysolite Mine. The men were deeply engaged in some sort of game and talked as they played.

"If it comes to one of us fellers, we'll get trouble good and plenty!" The speaker was a man named Peters—a man trusted by Manager Barton. One of the others answered impatiently.

"It's as fair for you fellers as it is for us. Nobody'll know who done it; anyway, the Chrysolite is good enough to pay for it, ain't they?"

"Gimme two cards," Peters said. "Why not arrange how to do it now? I'm sick of poker, anyway; it'll take all night to play it out. Tell us what to do, and we'll just draw cards for it."

The man who had answered him before threw down his cards. "All right," he said. "That'll give us a chance to get some sleep, too. Let's make it this way. Barton has got to know before morning that we're through, and he'll come down here hot-foot. He's the man *our* people want out of the way, and they'll pay for it. The only question is who'll do the job, as you say. When he gets his medicine, the Chrysolite can come into the mine O. K."

"Why have our boys got it in for Barton?" Peters asked. "O' course the money's good enough argument for me, but I'm curious."

"You ought to know by this time none of our gang can get a job in any mine he runs. Let alone the Chrysolite's job, we've got that in for him. Are you in it?"

"I am for one," Peters said recklessly. "And I!" "And I!" the others answered in chorus.

"That's the stuff," the ringleader said. "Here's the game: The Chrysolite peo-

ple leave Barton to us—now they've broke through. It's near twelve; all the miners will be out in a few minutes, and being Sunday morning, they won't come down again. We'll be alone. About daylight we'll start shootin' an' raise Cain generally. One of you fellows skip to the shaft and send up an alarm. Barton may bring others, but he'll come in front. You'll be shootin' to keep us fellows out, o' course, an' when Barton shows his nose around the corner, it's just a bullet gone astray; no one fired it, an' nobody's to blame. The Chrysolite'll get the mine; we'll get our money, an' Barton will be put where the boys want him. That is all. Where's that deck o' cards?"

Railey listened, his blood boiling with rage and horror. A traitorous game—murder for pay! The pack of devils! He first thought of hastening up to warn Barton, but he remembered what the manager had said about his intention to come down during the night. He might be in the mine that moment. There was an old, condemned incline leading into the mine, near the office—Barton might come down that at any time—he often did, as Railey knew. As he cudgeled his brains the ringleader spoke again.

"We'll put in a charge of powder, too, and blow the whole side out o' the drift, anyway," he said. "That'll sure spoil the evidence. Come on! let's deal the cards, and then we'll get some sleep. To-morrow's Sunday, and we'll have all the rest of the night to ourselves. I'll deal—the man that gets the ace o' diamonds shoots Barton."

The others agreed hoarsely. There was a minute's silence, during which Railey heard the *seep-seep* of the cards as they were dealt out, and somehow his thoughts went back again to that night at "The Alhambra"—the night that Barton had begun his salvation. The men were so absorbed in the deadly game that he could look more boldly now, and he took in the drift carefully. The rifles of the guards were stacked against the wall, between him and the men. If he could only get them!

Suddenly there was a shout and a hoarse cry from one of the scoundrels.

"Peters has got it!" the ringleader cried. "That settles it. It's your job, Peters."

"I'll do the job," Peters said doggedly. "See that you stand by me. Who's got that bottle?"

Railey saw the liquor passed around and heard them rehearsing the murder again. For nearly an hour he lay in the tunnel while the men talked and passed the liquor from hand to hand. Other bottles were produced, and they began to stretch themselves out drowsily. Once Peters came half-way down the drift, and Railey lay close, but the man went back, and he breathed again. When he dared take another look, they were all stretched out in uncouth attitudes.

If he only could reach the rifles! He knew the mechanism of Winchesters—the universal mine rifle; he was a skilled engineer and machinist—he knew that a thrust at the firing-pin was all that was necessary. With what? By George! He almost shouted above the snoring at the top of the drift! His candlestick! It was a long rod of steel—made so that the miners could thrust it into the clay or loose crevices of the rock. A touch of the point would do it. He knew it was life or death if they caught him at it, but he made up his mind quickly.

None of the snoring villains saw or heard the lithe figure creeping up the floor of the drift. Inch by inch it came on until it was but a few feet away. It stopped at the stack of rifles. Slowly and softly he drew them one by one down to him. He knew he could not carry them off—he could come and go once, maybe, but not twice or three times. The job had to be done there.

If he failed on even one, it meant his death—he would never reach the bucket alive—or, at least, he would never ascend the one-hundred-and-fifty-foot shaft while a murderer held a rifle in his hands below.

It only required the thrust of the steel rod and a slight blow with his now bleeding fist. He had disabled seven

and was forcing the pin out of the eighth and last, when one of the men groaned, rolled over, and raised himself on his elbow.

"What's that?" he asked sleepily.

The firing-pin gave, and the rifle slipped from Railey's hand. Down it clattered on the rocky floor, and in a moment he was flying for his life, with the villains falling over themselves, cursing and scrambling down the drift after him, lighting their candles as they came.

He was running in the darkness, with his hand on the overhead pipe, his only guide back to the shaft. At the first turning he struck a match and lighted a candle. Holding it with the flame from the draft, he took to his heels again. They saw his light ahead of them in the tunnel, and he heard them cursing the rifles and calling out to each other to shoot. He laughed aloud when he thought of the wrecked Winchesters. He knew he would be at the shaft far enough ahead of them to start up on the bucket—for Oakley or the fireman would wait to take him up, even though the miners were all out, and it must be close on to one o'clock, or even after, on Sunday morning—the only half-night in the week when the mines shut down.

It was hard going; he fell half a dozen times, but was up and off at once, bumping against the projecting walls and doubling the turns like a hunted hare.

It seemed to him he had been running for half an hour, with his eyes cast up every turning at that overhead steam-pipe, when he saw the flicker of a light before him like a star far down the tunnel. If it were Barton! Well, there would be two on the bucket then! He heard in the dim distance the yells of the pursuers.

Suddenly it flashed upon him that the miners had left a candle sticking at the pumps, to guide him to the bottom of the shaft. It was the shaft; the pumps, which never stopped, were chugging slowly, and the candle was sticking in a timber. And—blessed sight—there on the bottom rested the

bucket, with the wire rope hanging loosely.

He sprang upon it—and then off, as another thought flashed through his mind—a thought which could only occur to an engineer.

He stooped over the pumps, searching madly for some instrument. Then he shouted with joy, and brought to light a heavy monkey-wrench.

"I knew where I put it!" he cried gleefully. "Now for you devils!"

With a quick turn, his practised hand had unlocked the heavy iron strap that coupled the steam-pipe where it turned into the tunnel after reaching the bottom of the shaft. This pipe ran straight up to the engine-house, and connected with the big boilers, from which steam could be turned hissing and roaring into it by a turn of the lever.

The disconnecting was the work of only a second, but, as he sprang back on the bucket, the crowd of men surged into sight around a corner. They yelled when they saw him, and came dashing toward the shaft. Railey yanked the bell-cord, and yelled back defiance.

"Thought you had me, didn't you, you whelps!" he cried. "Well, you'll hear from *me* all right." The wire cable straightened up, and the bucket swung off the landing. "I'll send a message by pipe-line to you hounds!" he shouted.

The foremost man's hand just missed the edge of the ascending bucket. Railey kicked down at it as the bucket shot up into the shaft.

"So-long, till I see you again!" he shouted. "My regards to the Chrysolite!"

Their rifles useless, they could only curse back reply.

Faster and faster the bucket mounted up the dripping shaft. Looking upward, he saw the square hole on top grow from a star to larger proportions. "Oakley's in a hurry," he told himself, a little surprised at the speed of the ascent. "I hope he won't yank me up against the pulley-wheel!"

The unspoken thought had hardly

crossed his brain when the bucket shot up through the mouth of the shaft. Eight feet above the mouth it rose, and then stopped with a jerk that nearly threw him off his balance.

"Lower away—I'm too high," he cried. "Let her down, Oakley!"

He caught a yelled curse and a glimpse of Oakley standing beside the big drum down in the engine-house. Then he saw Oakley shake his fist at him. He heard him cry out something that sounded like an oath, and then he saw him jerk up the lever that controlled the drum. The next moment he was dropping down into the blackness again—the bucket seemed to fall away from his feet. Holding onto the rope with a death-grip, he felt the big pail below him banging against the sides of the boarded shaft, and sliding over obstructing bolt-heads.

He seemed to have dropped a dozen miles, when suddenly his hand-hold was torn away, the bucket sprang upward, and he dropped—slipping from the handle into its great maw, jammed in a heap in the bottom.

He seemed to lose consciousness for a moment; then he felt the bucket gently swaying from side to side. They were not at the bottom of the shaft then? Painfully he looked over the edge. The lights of the maddened guards were still twenty feet below him. While they shouted—thinking the bucket was jammed in the shaft, perhaps, he felt it gently mounting upward a few feet. Then it stopped, and he reached over the side, and signaled with the bell-cord.

"I'll let the hound know he hasn't killed me," he thought recklessly. "He can try the job over again."

The bucket started again, gently and slowly. It was a long time in the ascent. He knew when it reached the top of the shaft again, but he was unable to raise himself, even when he heard the trap-door, which covered the mouth of the shaft, slammed down below him. He heard also a cry of rage, and a voice shouting orders, and the voice sounded like that of Barton, the manager.

The bucket was gently lowered until it rested upon the trap-door, and a pair of muscular arms lifted him up. He tried to step over the side, and cried out with pain. His legs were crushed and useless. But he had caught another glimpse of the engine-room; he saw Barton leave the winding drum and come striding toward him, stepping over a prostrate figure that was stretched out on the floor. Next instant the manager's arms were around him.

"Thank God!" he cried. "The hound didn't kill you, then! We thought he had spilled you out of the bucket, or smashed you up."

"Where's Oakley?" Railey whispered weakly.

"I came in just as the devil dropped you—I shot him, and stopped the drum before the rope had all run out. Close shave, old man. Don't faint!"

"Guess not," Railey returned, with a grin of pain. "What was I thinking of? Oh, I remember! Barton, jump for the boiler, and turn that steam on. . . . They're all down below. . . . Peters and the head devils. . . . They let the Crysolite break through, and they . . . planned to murder you. . . . I wrecked their rifles so they couldn't shoot—"

"But the pipe runs to the drift, away up the tunnel—they're at the shaft, if anywhere—"

Railey raised his head again with a smile of triumph.

"I cut it . . . at the pumps. . . . You can drive the whole gang out . . . or cook them! They're right at . . . the end of the pipe."

He fainted.

The manager laid him down on the boards tenderly, and stood over him for a moment with the look of an avenging angel.

"You cut the pipe at the pumps, eh?" he gasped. "And Peters and that gang tried to kill you? And the Chrysolite's got the Silver King? We'll see about that—good boy!"

He sprang down into the engine-house and dashed back to the big boilers.

Railey was lying on a pile of blankets in the engine-room when he recovered consciousness. A great hissing and roaring was going on above him, and at first he thought he was on the shore of some vast water, in the spray of the rollers. But his head cleared when he saw the stern face of the manager bending over him.

"What is it?" The question came feebly from his lips.

The manager pointed upward with a grim smile.

"I'm giving them sulfur and live steam," he said. "We'll see how long those Chrysolite hounds will hold the drifts of the Silver King!"

He walked to the door and gazed with grim satisfaction at the shaft-house of the rival mine as he pictured the unwelcome surprise which awaited its owners.



IN DREAD OF DEATH

GENERAL TREPOFF, Russia's dead dictator, is not the only celebrity who has died a natural death, although repeatedly in danger of a violent one from assassination, and living in almost daily dread of it.

Prince Bismarck survived eight—some say nine—attempts to murder him. Queen Victoria thrice withstood unharmed the fire of would-be assassins—Oxford in 1840, Bean in 1842, and Maclean in 1882.

King Milan, of Serbia, who died peacefully in Vienna, in 1901, was shot at thirteen times in seventeen years. The Irish Invincibles, in the stormy days of the Land League, made five futile attempts to murder the Right Honorable W. E. Forster, then chief secretary.

Orsini, with his bombs, and at least half a dozen other political fanatics with knives and pistols, tried unsuccessfully to kill Napoleon III.; and among the attempts made to murder his predecessor, King Louis Philippe, may be mentioned those by Fieschi in 1836, Alibaud and Meunier in 1856, Darmes in 1840, Pelleteaux in 1842, Delacourt in 1843, and Henry in 1846.

Yet both men died peacefully in their beds; as did also Napoleon, whom many conspirators tried to blow up with infernal machines, stab with knives, and shoot with pistols.

Among living rulers, King Edward, of England, has been once fired at, by the anarchist Sipido in 1900; King Alfonso, of Spain, has had two bombs thrown at him; the Emperor of Austria's life was attempted by Libenzi in 1853, and by Overdank in 1882; the Sultan of Turkey has been four times shot at, and once escaped scathless from a bomb explosion; while the Czar, whose "removal" is being daily planned by revolutionaries all over Russia, has so far escaped unharmed, although on one occasion a cannon loaded with grape-shot was fired point-plank at him from a distance of a few hundred yards.

The Fortunes of Geoff

By K. and Hesketh Prichard

Authors of "Don Q.," "Roving Hearts," Etc.

VIII.—PERSONALLY CONDUCTED

(A Complete Story)



Geoffrey Heron-Haye looked back upon a year spent in exile, and he was ready to concede that he had changed. In those twelve months a quality of hardness, always

potential in him, had risen to the surface. His existence, made up, as it was, of an endless war against the hostilities of nature and an occasional one with those of humanity, tended to that development. At last he was independent; he had created an industry by an outlay of the only capital which he possessed, that of his physical strength. At that period he believed his best asset to be a rare constitutional strain which appeared to hold him immune from the influence of miasma; but perhaps another attribute, honesty, was as strong a factor in his success.

He was quite another person from the Geoff who had set forth to win his bread from the grasping fingers of the world. Gone was the fine geniality of old days; now an uncompromising reserve and a capacity for remorseless straight-dealing had brought him a reputation among the multicolored community that dwelt along the banks of the tropical river and its tributaries. With a well-burnt canoe and five picked Indians he had assumed the position of river-expressman, plying between the upper reaches and the coast. He worked extraordinarily hard, in a bath of molten sunshine by day, by

night often in the drench of fever mists.

In that climate, which is the true lotus-land of earth, his very name was lost to human tongue. He was known as El Expreso, and his crew looked upon him as the greatest man in the world. His recreation was an occasional newspaper or magazine; his old ambitions seemed like dreams of a previous existence, save when he received a letter from Gabrielle van Rooven, the girl artist in New York—a letter which always stung him into swifter traveling, for the more money he made the more lavish could he afford to be in his orders for the purchase of her pictures, under cover of aliases which caused him much anxiety and thought to diversify cunningly beyond even suspicion of suspicion. For the rest, over everything hung the odors of the river, the hush of the trees, and the endless orchestra of the forest, overborne by the refrain, infinitely monotonous, of his boatmen's song.

It was full, glaring midday, steaming and languorous, as the boat of El Expreso, urged by the Indian rowers, crept against the current round a bend of the river at the farthest westerly point of his route. Here a signal advised him whether it was necessary for him to call at a plantation some five leagues up an affluent.

The yellow-painted spar, swung out at right angles with the tree-trunk to which it was affixed, showed as a beck-

oning finger; and the nose of the canoe swung round between rising banks, as the men grunted, for the rowing now gave place to poling and haulage.

"To you!"

"Good luck!"

Geoff tossed off the iniquitous sherry and bitters which the fat Indian woman had prepared. It was two hours later, and he lay back in his chair and surveyed the narrow view of forest and mounting cliff through tired eyelids. The broad-bladed leafage, dry and sun-blackened, which formed the roof of the piazza, hummed with an insect population.

Old Tristan D'Acunha, industriously scratching himself, almost seemed as if he were attacked by a spasm of diffidence.

Becoming conscious of this, Geoff transferred his regard from the outer world to the human interest at his side. A more unsavory old man than Tristan D'Acunha it would have been hard to find. His head was bare and bald; he was bearded almost from the eyes; his loose trousers were tied with a withy from the forest; the upper portion of his body was partially clad in a creased calico coat of blue. Nevertheless, he had the reputation of being the richest man upon the rivers. When at last he spoke Geoff almost started at the words.

"When you left London what was the piece they had on at the Lyric?"

Geoff told him, but added that he had not seen the play.

"In my time," said old Tristan, with the grin of a satyr, "it was—— But, hah! what does it matter? That was over twenty years ago, and I shall never sit in a red-plush seat again." He looked narrowly at Geoff. "Perhaps you thought I never had? But you're mistaken. It may come as a surprise to you, Señor El Expreso, to hear that old Tristan D'Acunha is as English as you are. Aye, isn't it?"

"Frankly, it is," said Geoff.

Tristan drew his coat across his chest, as if by an involuntary movement.

"Twenty-odd years of this country would blister away any man's nationality. Besides, I may have had my reasons for using a purser's name. Why do I tell you all this, you wonder! Not without reason, be sure; not for the pleasure of hearing English, either. No!"

"Then why?" asked Geoff easily.

"Just because you can be useful to me. Because I am in need of a man to carry through an important commission for me. Understand?"

"In the ordinary way of business?"

Old D'Acunha broke into a disreputable laugh. "Nothing crooked, no. I know you, my lad." He sat up in his chair and went on more seriously. "No! But you will find this commission a better-paying game than what you call your ordinary business. If you're wise, you'll throw all else aside and get through with it at once. Will you? I'll make it worth your while."

"I'm waiting to hear what it is."

Old Tristan drew a dirty letter from his side pocket, and, following the address with a begrimed forefinger, read aloud:

To Señor Arturo Delguero. Calle Florida, Portonuevo:

He read the address twice, then added:

"I wish you to deliver this letter to Delguero, who is my agent. There are certain valuables which I want conveyed here in safety. Delguero will hand them over to you. . . . I have made all arrangements. You will lose no time."

"Are the goods bulky?" inquired Geoff.

Old D'Acunha indulged once more in his peculiar laugh. "Some of them," he said. "You'll need two dugouts."

"Very well."

"And how soon can you be back?"

"Twenty-two to twenty-four days."

"I'll pay you five hundred pounds for the trip, and an extra fifty pounds for every day under the twenty-four which you save. How does that suit you?"

"Oh, perfectly," said Geoff.

D'Acunha pounded upon the table until the Indian woman appeared.

"More sherry!" he cried. "And after that dinner—sharp! The Señor El Expreso starts soon. Make haste."

The woman replied at some length in her own language; evidently she was asking some questions, staring all the time at Geoff. Tristan cut her short with a curse. She crossed the littered clearing and vanished into the cooking-hut upon its outskirts. Geoff had risen and stood by the rail of the piazza. Something in his attitude seemed eloquent to the old man.

"When you've been as long in this country as I have, perhaps you'll be just what I am," he said defiantly. "I say!"

Geoff turned.

"What was your name over there?" D'Acunha stabbed with his cigar in the direction of England.

Geoff shrugged his shoulders. "What was yours?" he said.

The old man raised his lip in a snarl. "That's my business!"

"Quite true," agreed Geoff, and the topic dropped.

He had heard much of Tristan D'Acunha from time to time, for there was no subject more attractive upon the rivers; nor was it the first occasion by many upon which he had been face to face with the fierce old recluse of Oreyca. The business relations between them were pretty regular, and Geoff had no fault to find with his dealings; it was the man's personality that repelled him.

Señor Delguero read the letter which Geoff handed to him and looked up sharply. He was a pasty little personage, with a paunch, who dwelt much in the cool depths of his store, which faced darkly upon the Calle Florida. He said nothing aloud, but to himself he was observing that El Expreso, although gaunt, possessed a fine figure, and was moreover an undeniably handsome young man.

"When can the stuff be ready?" inquired Geoff. "D'Acunha wants it up in a hurry."

Don Arturo stared more curiously. "No doubt, no doubt! We will send

and see. It is a rough journey and a long one, señor."

"Of what nature is the freight?"

"Can it be that Señor D'Acunha did not inform you?" Delguero tossed his arms in dismay, and a black-eyed clerk emerged from some dim recess to listen to the talk.

"No!"

At the curt negative Don Arturo's eyes almost bulged. But Geoff's mind was elsewhere, his interest for the moment centered in discovering how soon the little agent would dispense with his presence and give him leisure to call at the post-office for his letters.

Impatient at the silence, Geoff resumed: "D'Acunha told me you would make over some valuable freight to my care which I was to convoy with all haste to Oreyca."

"But," cried Delguero, "you do not understand! When can you be ready to start?" he ended, in a resigned tone.

"I am ready."

"Yet it may be that Doña Carmel does not wish to leave at once."

"Doña Carmel?"

"But yes, who else? In this letter Señor D'Acunha orders me to place his daughter in your charge, that you may escort her up-river to his house. Did you not understand?"

"No," said Geoff grimly. "I assuredly did not."

The agent tucked his elbows in and spread his palms. "For six years Doña Carmel has been in the convent of Saint Mary and Joseph, in this city. She is nineteen now, and, they say, wilful. But come, we will drive to the convent and you shall be introduced to her." Don Arturo addressed a rebuke to the excited clerk, who was making a thin pretense of counting coffee-sacks, then he led the way into the street.

As they drove along Geoff was assailed by doubts. He felt that old Tristan had not dealt fairly in the matter, and that he would be entirely justified in refusing the commission thrust upon him. Yet the position held something piquant that lured him on. There would always be time, he told himself, to draw back; he would do so, of course,

in the end. For the moment, however, the thing amused him; it lent a passing color to the monotony of his life.

The wind of evening threw up clouds of dust into the wayside trees as they bumped along behind the long-tailed wasted pony. Meanwhile, Geoff reflected that in all probability Miss D'Acunha would "favor the paternal side in looks."

"I wonder, by the way," he mused, "who her mother was! Probably the fat Indian woman who served that abominable sherry and bitters."

And on this point the little agent was able to give him information. Mrs. D'Acunha was, it appeared, the daughter of an Indian chief, whom old D'Acunha had fought with and conquered in the days of his stormy youth.

It is impossible to say what Geoff expected, but to put it shortly, as he bowed to Doña Carmel, he came to the conclusion that the cacique's daughter must have been a very beautiful woman. Certainly the girl was radiant as a star. Her face was in itself a challenge, with dark, lovely eyes and lips that smiled languorously over white teeth.

She received the visitors gracefully and with entire composure in the presence of a monstrously stout duenna, whom she introduced as Doña Clara. The little agent began voluble explanations, based on the letter he had just received. He apologized with almost tearful regret for the orders conveyed in it; he suggested that Don Tristan had lived long out of the world . . . he wrung his puffy hands. . . .

"Pardon," the girl interrupted him. "Please to tell me simply who is to be my escort to Ercayo?"

"This young man, the Señor El Expreso. It is inconsiderate . . . it is even inconceivable!"

The girl's eyes dwelt on Geoff's bowed head and square shoulders, as he acknowledged the introduction. She smiled slowly, enchantingly, as she turned to Delguero. "Pray do not disquiet yourself. I find the plan excellent."

The little man fairly staggered, but Geoff, with a sudden recollection of one

of old D'Acunha's obscure speeches, spoke.

"This lady will accompany you, señorita?" He bowed toward the duenna.

"Doña Clara? But of course! My father arranged that long ago." The girl drooped her heavy-lidded glance.

Geoff breathed again, while the stout lady broke into bitter wailings at the prospect of the horrible hardships they were about to endure.

"I will do all that is possible for your comfort," said Geoff. "When shall you wish to set out, Doña Carmel?"

"To-morrow, señor," she replied promptly.

Against this decision Doña Clara expostulated in a series of screams, but without producing the smallest effect.

"At dawn, then, señor," said the girl serenely, and gave Geoff her hand.

The two men took their leave and climbed back into the crazy vehicle awaiting them. Delguero pulled out his handkerchief and wiped an exceedingly damp brow.

"I possess indeed a wife," he said desperately, "but that girl renders me insane! Her lips, her smile—yet, Señor El Expreso, I would not take your place, no, not I! What a will, that girl! It is a tigress! I feel it!"

Geoff hastened down to the water-side and rigged up awnings over the two dugouts, and bought a dozen cushions for the comfort of his passengers. And with the earliest hint of dawn they started. It seemed tragic to Geoff, when he thought of all that Doña Carmel was leaving, and of that to which she was going. The duenna seemed reconciled to her lot, even cheerful, as she was helped into the boat with her charge. Geoff followed in the second dugout, while the little agent waved good-by from the rotting wooden wharf.

On the fourth morning Geoff awoke to misfortune. How Doña Clara, who appeared hardly able to waddle two yards, had given him the slip, he never knew. But she was gone, and, although he systematically hunted through the Indian village on the bank, no trace of

her could be discovered. Thus Geoff found himself faced with the alternative of returning to Portonuovo to engage a new duenna, or of continuing a tête-à-tête journey. Nor was it he who decided the question. Doña Carmel, in nowise disturbed, pointed out that to return would precipitate the very evils they both desired to avoid. People in Portonuovo would be sure to talk. After all, even with the current it would take two days to get there. Geoff frowned, but acknowledged there was a good deal in what she said, and finally he gave in.

So he and his charming companion pursued their journey together. Carmel, somehow, managed that he should take the duenna's vacant place in her boat. The Indians who drove it sang long odes, which made Geoff supremely thankful that the girl did not appear to understand their dialect. The burden of their songs, being Englished, told of a great and brave man from the north with strong arms, and the radiant child of a cacique's daughter from the forest land, who smiled with eyes of love. Ten minutes' improvising brought them to prophecy and progeny. Geoff cursed them in his heart, all the more, perhaps, as he knew the position was one which might very easily be misunderstood.

Geoff urged his men to speed, but very slowly they passed the long, languorous reaches of the river; then one system of rapids after another was left behind, where the broad stream narrowed to a torrent, only to open again to lay its shining arms about low and wooded islands, till smokes upon the banks grew far and few between, and they moved through deep solitudes. Every night Doña Carmel's tent rose upon the land, while Geoff insistently kept a man or two in the dugouts with him.

Perhaps it was his very indifference, perhaps it was his well-meant allusions to Gabrielle van Rooven that set kindling to the fire of her ready nature, but, in spite of himself, the fact presently became apparent to Geoff that Doña Carmel—or Miss D'Acunha, as

she preferred to be called, because it was the "English fashion"—had begun to look upon him with eyes of more than kindness.

Every day brought its own difficulties. There were the portages, more frequent as they ascended higher up the river, when it was Geoff's part to aid Miss D'Acunha's accentuated helplessness in surmounting natural obstacles. This brought them more and more together. Add to it all that Doña Carmel was gloriously beautiful and Geoff no superhuman prig, and you will understand that the situation was full of possibilities.

Geoff cursed himself for his folly in yielding to the girl's arguments after Doña Clara left them; he chafed increasingly at the delays which seemed to crop up with surprising frequency; he fell into a silence broken only by orders to the men, and the barest courtesy to his companion; but Carmel's soft words and smiles, her perpetual dependence upon his help, gave no evidence that she noticed the change in him.

To this point matters had progressed, when, to Geoff's relief, the long travel began to draw in toward its close. The stream widened into swamps, expanses of black mud, and cane-brakes, among which teal, as bright as jewels, had their haunt. After that, as the stream gathered together among rocks, they reached the final halt some few leagues below Ercayo.

Whatever more mature qualities Doña Carmel may have possessed, a certain childlike explicitness of speech on most subjects was certainly hers. Thus, on the last evening, as Geoff came to bid her good night, she asked him, as usual, to stay and talk for a little.

"You have refused me many times, Don Geoffrey," she said, "but I have things to say to you which you must hear."

Geoff pulled up a log and sat down upon it, asking permission to light his pipe.

"But certainly it is our home, is it not?" she replied disconcertingly.

"Well, no, I don't think I'd like to call it that." He looked round at the broken forest.

"Shall you always remain in this country—Geoffrey?" she said.

"I hope not, Miss D'Acunha."

"What is it that draws you back across the cold sea?" she asked, moving a little nearer.

Geoff looked at her. He felt it was time to speak.

"Because I love a woman, a girl, who lives upon the edge of it. I have told you of her."

Miss D'Acunha, not at all discomposed, showed her white teeth in a smile which would have bewildered many men.

"There are other lovers in your country. Perhaps she has forgotten you," she observed.

"I trust not."

"Does she, then, love you so much, this Gabrielle?"

Geoff's brows drew together. "As far as I know she does not love me at all." He well knew how much he was weakening his position by this avowal.

"Then sigh no more for the northern rose when there are flowers here—flowers perhaps not less lovely—waiting for you to pluck them." She laid a slender, dark hand upon his knee.

He affected not to see it. "Only the rose will satisfy me," he said brusquely.

"What constancy!" she sighed, but with a hint of scorn. "Can nothing make you forget?" She rose and stood close beside him.

"Doña Carmel," said Geoff, "your father entrusted you to me. I am for the moment his servant."

She laid her arms suddenly about his neck. "What matter," she murmured, in her low, caressing voice, "since I, to all eternity, would be yours?"

Geoff put her hands gently away. "You don't understand" he said hurriedly; "your—your father would be furious."

Carmel smiled in her own mysterious way. "We'll see," she answered.

Supper was over. Geoff had seen the meeting of father and daughter. Car-

mel accepted his welcome with the air of a queen. She showed no disgust, no horror; merely a wordless disdain.

As for old Tristan, he was enchanted with his daughter; her cold repulse of his affectionate advances he found adorable. Geoff had left them together, while he went back to unload the dug-outs. The oddly assorted couple appeared to be on good terms when he came back, although Tristan, in a new pink pajama suit and a high, hard felt hat, looked rather worse than usual in contrast with the girl, whose shimmering white gown clung about her shapely figure.

It was yet full early when Geoff stood up to say good-by. "I must be getting back," he said; "we make an early start down-river in the morning."

D'Acunha craned forward his neck with an aggressive gesture.

"Hey, what's that?" he asked. "The Indians have gone to fetch Father José. You must wait a bit. Here's an impatient lover for you, Carmel!" He turned to nudge his daughter, but she had vanished into the house.

"What do you mean?" Geoff turned sharply.

"What do *you* mean?" snarled the old man. "Do you think you can play fast and loose with my girl like that? But you sha'n't, no! D'you dare to have the face to bring her up here without a shred of reputation, you and her traveling alone all the way, and then clear off? Well, you've gall, haven't you?"

"It was your own wish. Besides, Doña Clara—"

"Did you pay her to give you the slip?" sneered Tristan.

"You know I did not." Geoff was savagely angry.

"Well, you lost her, anyway," said the old man, with more quietness, "and with her went Carmel's good name. Look here and listen carefully. I'm a richer man than you or any in this infernal country, I guess. Without offense, may I ask what are you? A knockabout, a broken Britisher, that's about your size, hey? Now, Carmel is

my girl, and she'll have as good a dowry as any of those stuck-up, bony women at home. She has wealth, she has beauty, and, what's more, she's become fond of you. You've compromised her, and now you refuse to marry her! What's the reason? Don't like me for a father-in-law, perhaps?"

Geoff interrupted him. "The first and the last reason," he said, "why I will not, why I must refuse to do as you wish, is that I am already——"

Old D'Acunha stormed to his feet.

"Don't tell me you're already married?" he shouted.

"No, but I care for——"

"Pooh! Carmel will soon teach you to forget that. As to my wealth, I'll prove it. Come and see. Come and see." He shuffled down the steps of the piazza.

Geoff followed. He cared not at all to hear of the old satyr's riches, but he was glad of any excuse for moving. He had imagined he heard a rustle in the room behind him, and he preferred that what had yet to be said should be said out of Miss D'Acunha's hearing.

Old Tristan led the way, muttering to himself. At the back of the house the land dipped in under the shoulder of the hill, forming a ravine, on either side of which ten thousand flowering shrubs filled day with their yellow refulgence and heavy perfume. At the head of the gorge a perpendicular cliff rose abruptly from the sea of blossoms. Tristan made his way toward it, sidling along a half-obliterated track, then up a steep path to the mouth of a cave, screened by trees and hanging plants.

The entrance was a rude archway, almost completely filled up by a flat, transverse slab of living-rock, which left an opening so narrow that D'Acunha pushed himself through it with difficulty.

"I don't want to see your money," said Geoff from outside. "I shall never handle it. Come out and let me finish what I have to say."

There was a pause, then the faint light of a candle showed within, and Tristan's voice came to him.

"Hold on a minute. I have something to see to, here."

Geoff lit a cigarette to keep off the mosquitoes, and waited impatiently. At the end of a few moments he heard a dull thud and a groan, and the light went out.

"What's the matter?"

"The box has fallen over on me. I can't move my leg!" The reply was followed by a string of curses.

Geoff stepped into the gloom of the cave. "Where are you?"

There was a scream of rusty metal and a clash.

"Now you're trapped, my fine lad!" called old D'Acunha, with vindictive energy from outside. "You can shout if you like, no one will hear you. But be sure of one thing. You won't get a drop of drink or a mouthful of food till you come to a proper mind."

Perhaps Geoff swore also, for a portcullis of stout ironwork showed black in the cave-mouth between him and the daylight of the ravine. This was, in real truth, old Tristan's strong room, put to-day to the strange use of compelling an unwilling lover.

"Now, see here," said D'Acunha slowly and clearly. "I've been in this country for a while, and my daughter is all I have got to care for. I don't want her to take up with a half-blood Portuguese from the coast, still less with an Indian. I am a white man myself, and I mean her to marry a white man. They're scarce out here. Well, now I've found one, and you bet I don't let him go."

Geoff made no answer. To bandy words with D'Acunha at that moment would have been worse than useless.

"What's the good of this fool's talk about the other woman?" resumed Tristan. "First, she wouldn't stand this country; next, I'll take my oath she hasn't the looks of my girl. Hey?"

Still silence.

"Carmel will come herself for your answer some time. I will give her the key. She shall be your jailer, and it's likely she'll persuade you. You know that I've sent for Father José. He can't get here under five days.

There will be something for him to do, anyway. If not a marriage, why, a funeral!"

Half an hour convinced Geoffrey Heronhaye that, unaided, there was no escape for him. The place was nearly dark, but he had a box of matches, and with these he made such exploration as was possible under the circumstances. A bat or two dropped from the roof and flitted about the cave; beyond that his search had no result.

He threw himself down upon the sandy floor. The heavy smell of the flowers stole in from outside, and troubled him with old remembrances. He was quite remote from aid, and he never doubted that whatever D'Acunha threatened he would carry out. It seemed to Geoff the whole affair had been planned to this issue, for the old man was crafty and subtle. He had ruled his dependents so long at Ercayo that opposition maddened him.

Geoff could have laughed at the irony of it had he had a laugh in him. His first really sound venture in the way of earning a livelihood to end in this! And Gabrielle? He wondered what she was doing at the moment. Did she spare him more than an occasional thought, that girl who would not love him, yet from whom he could not tear away his heart?

The hours drifted away, and he commenced to feel the torments of thirst. A momentary flush of sunset crept through the interstices of the door, and went out, to be succeeded almost at once by the bluish luminosity of moonlight. No dominant sound came to him beyond the wooden whir of crickets and the rustlings of night in the bush.

Presently the moon, surmounting some corner of the gorge, poured her light full into the opening of the cave; and there, on the space before it, more lovely than ever, or so it seemed to Geoff, stood Carmel. No man could be cold to the appeal of her beauty.

"Geoffrey, I am here," she said softly.

He rose and came closer to the iron trelliswork which separated them.

"See, I have brought you food and

water at great risk. I could not bear to think of you thirsty and hungry, though if my father knew!"

"What, then?" asked Geoff.

"He would flog me. Oh, I cannot think of what he would do to me!"

"Do you know why I am shut in here?" asked Geoff.

"No." Anxious innocence rang in the word. "Why?"

"That is strange," said Geoff, "for your father told me that he would give you the key, and that you should be my jailer."

An extraordinary change came over the girl. She stamped her foot. "What a fool that old man is! Headlong, headlong always!"

A breath of wind sighed through the trees.

"So you see," went on Geoff, "I know all your cards, and you know all mine."

"Is the choice so difficult, Geoffrey? On the one side death in this horrible place; on the other"—her voice had dropped again to the caressing tone which always touched him—"a wife who loves you as no northern woman could!"

"I have a favor to ask of you, Miss D'Acunha."

"Yes."

"Don't come here again. Let your father come instead."

"Why?" A little thrill in the word told that she understood his weakening mood. "Why? Look at me, Geoffrey! Am I not beautiful enough to love?"

He shivered. Gabrielle was so far away, so remote from his life. If she must be lost to him, might there not be a worse fate than——

"Do you think?"—he spoke the more roughly for the thought in his mind—"do you think this would be a promising first chapter to a married life?"

Carmel laughed clearly.

"Are you not afraid that I may remember this against you afterward?" he went on.

She laughed again. "Not in the least. I can take care of myself."

"Well, give me the water. I am thirsty."

She stooped to raise the earthen bottle, and held it near to the bars. Its cool fragrance reached him.

"Is it not delicious? Just say those four words, Geoffrey; say 'I will marry you,' and I will open the door."

"I cannot."

"I am sorry, for I do not wish to see you suffer. See!" She turned the jar so that some of the water flowed out upon the sand.

"What are you doing? What are you doing?" Geoff's thirsty eyes watched every falling drop. "Give it to me."

"Oh, my love, I long to give it to you! Geoffrey, say those four words, and let me unlock the door. Make haste! See, I am spilling away the water." She deliberately tilted the jar once more, and the thin stream from it glittered in the moonlight.

Geoff's dignity came to his aid. He watched in silence as the precious water sank into the ground; watched the strange contrast of her steady, unfaltering hand with the passionate pleading in her face. Slowly and more slowly the last of it drained away, and she held the jar reversed for a moment.

"I am cruel, cruel, because I love you!" she cried, in a sob of passion. "I would rather see you dead than give you to another woman. Can't you understand? If you will die, you must, for I shall never, never let you go!"

Next day the weary hours dragged as if they could not end. His thirst had risen to an agony; at intervals he watched the wild life of the forest. A tinkle of water continually fretted him, for a little spring dripped down the outer face of the cliff, its course marked by green ferns and mosses; a butterfly of indigo blue lingered in the damp shade. It was the hottest hour of the day, and Geoffrey, worn out, dropped into a restless doze and dreamed. He thought a jaguar with soft tread passed miraculously through the grating of his prison-door and stood poised to leap upon him. He struggled frantically to raise his weighted eyelids.

Then cool water plashed upon his face. He woke and opened his eyes.

The fat Indian woman was bending over him. "Drink," she said, in her toneless voice, and pressed a vessel of water to his lips.

Geoff never forgot the rapture of that draft.

"Now you run, queek." Her dull glance traveled from him to the open door.

Geoff rose to his feet and began to murmur something of gratitude. An inert negation in her attitude stopped him.

"Not for you I do these thing," she said impassively.

"No?" exclaimed Geoff, still half-dazed. "Why, then?"

"For Carmel, for my daughter."

"Carmel your daughter?"

"Mine and old Tristan's. I no wish she marry white man. I save her. I marry white man, and for me many blows, many curses. Not good, no." She paused, then continued in her monotonous singsong: "Old man, siesta; Carmel, siesta; know nothing. Go!" She pushed Geoff out into the daylight, pulled down the grating to its place, and locked it securely. "Old Tristan white, old Tristan bad," she grumbled, as she waddled away without even turning her head.

In ten minutes Geoff had found a dugout, and was drifting down the current. The house which sheltered Carmel and old D'Acunha looked like a solid block of ebony in the shadows, as he caught a last glimpse of it from the bosom of the sunlit stream.

Some two years later it chanced that Geoff heard again of Doña Carmel, who in the meantime had become Carmel Delguero. For the little agent's first wife took the yellow fever and died. But rumor had it that, although she was not to be compared with her successor in charm or beauty, Delguero, in the midst of his new happiness, sometimes sighed for her more commonplace and less strenuous rule.

On the Great Bahama Bank

By T. Jenkins Hains

Author of "On the Outer Reef," "The Arrow," "The Black Barque," Etc.

There is so much bad in the best of us that we cannot afford to climb upon a pedestal and play the judge of our fellows. That is why we have so much tolerance for a man like Bahama Bill, the wrecker, whose acquaintance our readers made in the March issue of the "Popular" in Mr. Hains' story "On the Outer Reef." The present story tells of another episode in the life of the burly wrecker, and we think you will find it an exceptionally interesting narrative.

(A Complete Novel)



FORMALONG JOUR-
NEGAN was a Conch,
a native of the Baha-
mas. He stood six feet
four inches upon his
thin spindle-shanks,
and it is doubtful if he
ever weighed more

than one hundred pounds; no, not even when soaking wet. He was thin.

He lit up for the night, wiped the bar free from the gin and bitters spilled there by a drunken customer, and then turned to survey his room, waiting for the whistle of the liner. It was the night the *Momus* was due, the giant New York mail liner, ten thousand tons and not less than three hundred passengers. All of these would be thirsty, for the weather is always warm in Key West in the early spring.

Journegan was a "spouter." That is, he had been with a religious bunch of reefers, and he was free to make use of the Scriptures—too free entirely to suit the orthodox ecclesiastics of Key West. Over the sign of "The Cayo Huesso" the legend ran thus: "As it was in the beginning, it is now," showing that Journegan was not a reformer at all, but believed in the Bible and the true creed. And the worst of it all was

that he was accurate in his quotations; not only accurate, but invincible and gifted with that terrible weapon—an unfailing memory.

"Why do you use such blasphemy?" asked a divine, shocked at the sign and its motto.

"I was taught that there creed by a better man than you, suh, and he said: 'As it ware in the beginning, it is now, an' ever shall be, world without end. Amen.' I heard ye say them same words onct when I 'tended meetin'. What ye got agin' 'em, hey?"

"Nothing at all—nothing at all."

"Then cl'ar out. Git erlong. Don't come makin' no trouble fer me. I don't ask ye to drink—git away."

"Yes, sir," went on Journegan, turning to an approaching customer. "It's the same now as it always ware—same as it ware in the beginning—always shall be just the same—human nature never changes, not at all. There'll always be the bad, and always be the good. The bad are the strong gone wrong. The good are the weak tryin' to make good; sometimes they're strong too, but very seldom. Strength and goodness don't go together except in rare cases, but when a good man's strong, he's sure nuff strong."

"Ye see, we've all got a livin' to make. We hire men to study religion for us and pay 'em to preach it out of pulpits—yes, sir, actually pay 'em to git up and preach about th' Gospel as if you or me couldn't read or write! What's the sense? What's the sense of paying a man for doing something you can do yourself just as well? If salvation depends on a fellow's ability to translate the Gospel, then it's a mighty poor Gospel for poor folk—but it don't. It's a good livin' they make preachin', and I for one don't take no offense at a feller chargin' for his talk; not that he knows any more than you or me—'cause he can't know a blame bit more—but we've all got to live, an' the feller what talks has to live, too. Let him live by talk. Let me live by sellin' things. I don't ask no favors, but I don't want no guy what jest talks an' talks fer money to come around an' bother me—that's all; yes, that's erbout all, I reckon."

You will see that Journegan was very popular with the strong men who worked and very unpopular with the men who preached.

"Your head is as long as your body," admitted Captain Smart, entering the gilded hall. "What you say goes, Stormalong—gimme a drink."

"Goin' to meet the ship?" asked Journegan.

"Yep, I'm goin' back in her if I get the chance," said Smart. "I've been on the beach here a week now. Dunn settled up his wrecking bill with that fellow 'Bahama Bill' and Captain Sanders and their gang, and that lets me out. I'm out a good berth. She was a fine yacht."

"'Twasn't your fault you lost her, I heard tell," said Journegan, with a leer.

"I did all I could," admitted Smart, "but I lost her, just the same. There is no excuse for the loser, you know."

"Yep, I knows well enough," said Journegan slowly, as if thinking over something. "'Peared to be leakin' badly all o' a sudden-like, hey?"

"Yes, started to leak during the blow, or just before it. A bit of hard luck you may say."

"Well, you'll know more about the reef if you stay here a while."

There was some strange meaning in Stormalong's tone, and it was not lost on Smart.

"You are the second man who has said something to that effect," said the seaman. "Now, what the devil do you mean by it?"

"Oh, nothing much. No use getting worked up by what I said. You don't know much about the ways of folk along the reef and bank. That's all—there goes the whistle of the *Momus*."

A deep-toned siren roared out over the quiet waters of the reef, sounding far away to sea, and seemed to be coming from some distant point to the southward. Smart recognized it as the call of his ship, the ship he had left months before for the sake of a woman.

He drank off his liquor and started for the dock, making his way along the white roadway and joining the throng of Conchs who lazily walked toward the shore to see the great liner make her landing. She was a new ship, a ship of huge tonnage for a Southern liner, and it was a treat to watch her officers dock her. Slowly she came drifting in toward the land, her mighty engines sending the white coral water moving gently from her stern.

Her giant bows came near the landing. A tiny figure flung a filmy line through the air, a line so small in proportion to her great bulk that it seemed but a spider-web. But behind it followed a great hawser, and a dozen lazy black men hauled it ashore and threw the loop over a pile-end.

Then a shrill whistle sounded, and the deep rumble of the engines told of the backing strain. She swung alongside the wharf finally and made fast her stern and spring-lines. Then a gangway shot out, and the captain came quickly down, followed by a swarm of passengers.

As the ship was to stop only a half-hour at Key West, her commander had to make a quick clearance and entry, taking on some fifty passengers who were in the cigar business and who made Key West an important stop on

that account. They were all through first-class to New York. Smart joined Captain Flannagan while he walked briskly toward the custom-house. The skipper shook his hand warmly, and asked how he came to be down there. Then followed the story of the wreck of a yacht, and the tale of an officer out of a berth, all of which Flannagan listened to with waning interest. The old, old story was uncommonly dull to him. He was powerless to do anything, and he spoke forth.

"It's no use of talking about it any more, Smart. You know the rules of the company as well as I do. You know there are other men waiting to step into berths, and when a man steps out like you did it's up to him to stay out and give the rest a chance. How would you like to have a man come back into a ship and block you for perhaps twenty years? No, it won't do, even if I could do it. You are out. Stay out, unless you want to start in again at the foot, as a third mate."

"No, I can't drop to that position at my age," said Smart sadly. "I'm holding a master's ticket, and if you can't take me on as second at least, why, all right. I'll have to ship somewhere else."

"I'm mighty sorry, old man," said Flannagan, "but you know it's not my fault. It's the rules of the company, and if I took you on to New York you would be dropped as soon as we landed. I can give you a passage up, if you want it. Here's a key to the stateroom—take it."

"No, you don't. If I stay ashore, I stay right here. Don't worry about me. I'll try to make good. I know I was a fool, but sometimes we all play the fool. Good-by, and good luck. How does the ship run?"

Flannagan was gone. The lights of Stormalong's shone out brightly in the distance. Smart kept his eyes upon them for a long time, and wandered about the streets. The warning whistle of the liner blew for a farewell, and as the sound roared out upon the night the seaman turned away and went up the street.

II.

Captain Smart was in a particularly uncomfortable mood. He had left the liner for a woman, a woman whom he desired and whom he thought worth any sacrifice. Later he discovered that she was selfish to the core. He had expected companionship, love, and sympathy. He had found cold, calculating animalism: a brutality all the more horrible for its refinement, for its servitude to wealth and position. Yes, she had told him plainly just how she felt about it, and had made it perfectly plain that she would mate only with some one who could place her in surroundings which she desired, not what she would get as the wife of a seaman, a captain of a ship. And he could not blame her. No, it was manifestly not her fault. It was the fault of the society in which she had been brought up. It had stifled the woman in her and developed the snob to an extent that would admit of no choice on the part of either.

He had seen his mistake, and the loss of the yacht upon which she was a guest had given him a chance to complete the affair, to get away from all the familiar surroundings. Now he was "on the beach."

"On the beach," to a sailor means without a ship and without money. Smart had neither ship nor money, but he had a strong constitution and high spirits, and the lights of Stormalong's were still burning brightly down the long, smooth road.

He entered and noticed that the tables were full. A company of men were playing cards at the farthest end of the saloon, and he made his way toward them. A game of poker always fascinated him, and he hung over the back of a player, watching his cards and noting the manner he threw away a high pair to fill a flush.

"Would ye like to set in?" asked Stormalong, who had come over to get an order for drinks.

"I wouldn't mind setting in for a short time," Smart nodded. "No all-night sance for me, and quit when you want to."

"Gents," began the saloon-keeper, "this is Captain Smart, of the schooner—ah, well, never mind that, hey? Well, Smart was chief officer of the *Momus* just gone out. He's got the dough, and kin play a keard or two, if you give him a chance."

"Set right in here, cap," said a thick-set, sunburnt man whose calling was manifest in his face. "I'm a reefer, an' run a sponger, but I reckon I kin play with yer."

"You make five—just right for luck," was the greeting of another, a thin, eagle-nosed fellow who declared that his name was Smith—Wilson Smith.

A man with a thick growth of beard nodded to him across the board, and a squat, twinkling-eyed little fellow, with the hue of the tobacco factory upon him, held out his hand. "My name's Jacobs—traveler for the Garcias'—glad to meet you."

The cards were dealt round afresh, and Smart took up his hand. For some time nothing occurred to distract the attention of the players from the game, but gradually their talk and the clink of money as they made change attracted the crowd.

Smart was aware of a huge form just behind him, and, glancing up, he looked right into the face of Bahama Bill, the black mate of the wrecking-sloop *Seahorse*. A huge grin was upon the black man's ugly face, and he laid his enormous hand upon Smart's shoulder. "Huh, how yo' is, cap? Thought you'd gone away fo' sho. Stopped to teach 'em how toe play de game, huh? Yah, yah, ya-a-a!"

"Stormalong," broke in Wilson Smith, "I don't want to appear rude, but I draw the color line sometimes, especially at keards. If the big nigger standing behind us will sit down or move along, it'll facilitate the game some."

Bahama Bill heard the remarks, but, being in a white man's saloon, he said nothing. He showed his teeth in a mirthless smile, a smile which boded no good for the man who had spoken and who was evidently a stranger to him.

Stormalong motioned to the wrecker

to sit down, and Bill did so without comment. He was well known and fairly well liked, and his record allowed him some privileges which were not accorded to men of his race. Being part owner as well as mate of the wrecking-sloop made him a person of more or less note. Therefore Stormalong furnished him with unlimited rum, which he paid for from a wad of bills which made the observers gaze with surprise. Mr. Dunn, the owner of the yacht which Smart had lost, had been trimmed very cleanly. The salvage on her had been large for so small a vessel, owing to the valuable silverware, furnishings, and other fittings.

III.

The game progressed slowly, but Wilson Smith began to win little by little. Smart suddenly found he held three aces. He raised the limit before drawing, and discarded two cards, hoping to draw another ace. Jacobs, the cigar man, came in, and Smith raised it one better, which Smart made good, the other two men dropping out.

Bahama Bill had drunk several glasses of rum by this time, and he again appeared to fix his attention upon the game, but not so as to attract attention, standing well back of all but keeping his eyes fixed in a steady gaze upon the thin-faced man's cards.

The cards were dealt, and Smart drew a pair of queens, filling, and thus holding a strong hand. Jacobs drew one card, and quietly slipped it into his hand. His face was emotionless, and he puffed lazily at his cigar, complacently cocked up at a high angle in his jaws. Smith drew four cards, and, after conning his hand carefully, bet a dollar.

Jacobs raised, and Captain Smart came upon him for the limit. Wilson Smith, to the surprise of all, raised back the limit. The cigar man was game, and came again. Smart holding an ace-full, could not, of course, let it pass him, so he again raised it.

"We all bein' so mighty peart about

our hands—let's throw the limit off," suggested Smith.

"I'm more'n willin'," agreed Jacobs. "What d'ye say, cap?"

"I haven't much money"—Smart hesitated—"and just came in the game to pass the time, but if the rest are willing, I'll stay."

Wilson Smith looked around approvingly. "I'll make it fifty dollars better than what there's in it." He drew a cigar from his pocket and lit it with an easy air.

"I'll have to make it two hundred better," Jacobs protested grimly. "I hate to gamble, but I can't let a hand like this pass me."

"Oh, I haven't any money like that." Captain Smart's brows were raised in surprise. "Fifty is all I can show."

"Well, I'm sorry about that," said Jacobs. "Of course we'll give you a show, but the limit was put off on purpose to let us play keards."

Smart was aware of a heavy hand upon his shoulder. He turned, and found Bahama Bill standing close to him.

"Take dishear, cap." And Bill thrust an enormous roll of bills unto his pile upon the table. "I'll stand by toe see yo' through."

Wilson Smith looked up again, and then called for Stormalong Journegan.

"Journegan," said he, "this is the second time I have had to speak to you about being annoyed. If it happens again there'll be trouble."

"Play poker," came a voice from the crowd.

Smart gazed about him for a moment. It was evident that the mate of the *Seahorse* had an object in putting up his cash. He was quick-witted enough to see that it was best to go ahead without making any comment. He could stop after this hand.

Bahama Bill drew back at a sign from Journegan, but still fixed his gaze upon Smith's hand. It seemed as though he had seen the hands of the men, and was betting upon the best. Smart could think of no other reason for the money being left him, and he felt certain that he would win. Bill was

just backing the hand he had seen to be the winner.

As long as that was the case he would go the limit. He counted out five hundred dollars and laid it upon the table. Then he picked up his cards again and skimmed over the squeezers, waiting for the end.

Jacobs drew out the amount to make good, and the thin-faced man felt in his pocket for his roll. He bent over in doing this, and as he did so he held his cards close to his breast in his left hand. He was still fumbling in his trousers pocket with his right when a black hand suddenly reached over his shoulder and drew forth a complete "hold-out" from under his waistcoat where his hand pressed. The movement was so quick, so powerful, and so disconcerting, that for an instant there was a silence, and the fellow threw up his head. The next moment he had drawn his gun, a long, blue-barreled revolver of heavy pattern, and had swung it up over his shoulder and fired like a flash of lightning into Bahama Bill.

Instantly there was an uproar, and above the noise of the struggling mass of men there sounded the bull-like bass of the mate of the *Seahorse*: "I got yo' fer sho, Skinny Ike—I got yo'."

IV.

Captain Smart grabbed what money he could get hands upon, and while thus engaged the cigar man dealt him a powerful blow over the shoulders with a chair. It had been meant for his head, but instead it landed upon the heavy muscles Smart had earned by hard work hauling lines. He gave a yell, and sprang upon his assailant. Just then Stormalong Journegan opened with his gun, and the quick firing drowned all other sounds.

Through the smoke of the fight Smart saw his man, and smote him with all his power upon the jaw. The fellow went down and out. Many of the bystanders had been with the crooks, probably a gang of six or more, and these fell upon Smart and Bahama Bill.

Smart found himself fighting two

quick, agile fellows who struck at him with weapons he could not distinguish. The rest piled upon the giant mate while Journegan fired upon the bunch, taking care not to hit any one, for he had no desire to ruin his business. His lead, however, went so close that one man got a clip that knocked him over. The room filled with smoke, and the uproar was loud enough, but suddenly Smart was aware of the giant Conch struggling to his feet and swinging out right and left with two mighty fists, sending men tumbling about like chips before a storm. Just beneath him the thin-faced man, Wilson Smith—dubbed "Skinny Ike" by Bill—lay in a heap.

"Come on, yo' muckers, come on an' git yo' medicine," he bawled. Then he picked up the prostrate man, and, taking him by the shoulders, used him as a flail, swinging him about his head and knocking every one in his path into a state of submission. The men around Smart fled in confusion, and in a moment Bahama Bill and the captain stood alone in the end of the room, the rest of the onlookers making good their escape to the street. Journegan stood behind his bar and grinned down the barrel of his empty gun.

"Air ye hurted much, Bill?" he asked.

"Hurt!" roared the giant mate. "What'd hurt me here, anyway, 'cept yo' blamed rum, hey?"

"Well, if you want to make a git-away now's the time, I reckon, for this place'll be pulled to-night sure—an' that in a mighty few minutes."

Bahama Bill dropped the limp form of Wilson Smith. The man was not seriously hurt, only horribly bruised. The rest were either insensible from blows or unable to rise from the smash of the thin fellow's body upon them, for the mate had stove them hard enough to break ribs and arms with his human whip. Some of the gang essayed to sit up and take notice after the mate ceased to speak. One had the temerity to draw a gun, which Bill unceremoniously kicked out of his hand.

"I reckon we'd better be goin' 'long, cap," said the big black. "This place'll be pulled by the marshal inside o' ten

minutes. Take up w'at dough you sees; I'll kerlect it off'n you later."

"Didn't you git a plug?" asked Journegan.

"Oh, yas; jest a little hole in de shoulder—dat's nothin'. Come on, cap."

Smart hesitated a minute. "Where do we go?" he asked.

"Aboa'd de *Seahorse*—an' to sea as fast as we kin git her movin'. Ought toe been gone befo' dis, but when I see dat Skinny settin' in to skin yo', I jest naterally had toe take a hand. What-cher s'pose I handed yo' dat money fer?"

"But I haven't done anything wrong—nothing to run for," said Smart.

"Yo' try an' think straight a minute, cap. Yo' ain't got many friends here. Take my advice an' don't git pulled. De clink is mighty mean here. I don't know why I should take a shine toe yo', cap, but yo' shore did set in dat game ter win—an' yo' kin hit pretty straight, too."

"Gwan, before it's too late," said Journegan.

A rush of feet sounded in the street, followed by the hoarse voices of men nearing "The Cayo Huesso." The door of the saloon was suddenly burst open, and the marshal, with a posse of twenty men behind him, came into view.

"De window, cap," yelled Bahama Bill, and without waiting a moment he sprang through, carrying the sash and glass, shutters, and all with him. Through the opening Smart plunged instinctively, and as he did so he heard the sharp command to halt, followed by the crack of a gun. He had managed to get clear by a fraction of a second, and, landing upon his feet, started after the dark shadow which he knew was the black sailor making for the beach.

V.

Down the road Captain Smart ran as fast as he could go, trying vainly to reach the tall form of the mate, who kept the lead easily until the lights of the harbor came into view. Then he slacked up and Smart came up with him.

"Dat sho was fun, hey?" laughed the mate, not the least winded from his dash for liberty. "Cost yo' a hundred dollars to git clear ef dey catch yo'. Dey don't run yo' in fer fun down here. Dat's de *Seahorse*. Git inter dat small boat—so."

"How about Journegan? Will they fine him for the fracas?"

"Oh, no. He stands in wid de gang—pays fer de trouble he makes. Journegan is a good man—he's all right."

"He was with the crooks, was he?" asked Smart.

"Oh, yes, he thought you had money—he has to stand in wid de gang. He was mad as er hornet at me buttin' in, but jest couldn't help it. I'll square him some day, an' he knows it. If he didn't know it, he'd 'a' plugged me when dey jumped me. I reckon he c'u'd 'a' done it, all right, for he's a mighty fine shot, dat Journegan. But I sho had it in fer Skinny Ike—he done me onct."

"Seems like a pretty tough bunch of men along the bank here, don't it?" said Smart. "Journegan hinted that there was something done wrong to Mr. Dunn's yacht—he said she must have leaked—what?"

Bahama Bill stopped rowing the small boat. They were half-way to the *Seahorse*, and lights were already showing along the shore, telling plainly that pursuit would be made in short order. The tide set them toward the vessel, but Bill gazed steadily at Smart through the darkness.

"Did Journegan say dat?" he asked quietly.

"Yes, and I would like to know what he meant by it."

"You know why he did all dat shoot-in'—all dat firin' to hit nobody? Dat was jest to get the place pulled—pulled before you made a gitaway, toe git your money. He knowed you an' me were enemies—knowed dat yo' had it in fer me, knowed dat I wrecked Mr. Dunn's yacht, an' dat yo' sho had no claim wid me—an' dat's where he made a mistake——"

"You wrecked the schooner?" cried Smart.

"Sho, cap, I dun wrecked her. Don't

yo' remember de day—de night—I came abo'd, harpooned by a fool Yankee mate? Well, I was pullin' a seam dat night—dat's what made her leak——"

"You are a devil—the blackest rascal I ever met. You can take me ashore, I won't have anything more to do with you—turn about."

"Not a bit—no, suh. Yo' goes wid me dis trip, sho."

Smart hesitated not a moment, but sprang overboard and struck out for the shore, calling loudly for help.

Bahama Bill sat gazing after him for a moment, swearing deeply. Then he carefully shipped the oars, stood up, and the next moment plunged over the side after him. In a few rapid strokes he came up to the sailor. With one mighty arm he circled the swimmer, holding his arms to his sides as easily as though he were a child. With his other hand he struck out lustily for the sloop and gained her side, where two heads peered over looking at him.

"Pass a line, quick," he called.

A line dropped instantly over the side and fell within reach. Smart was quickly trussed and hoisted aboard and the mate climbed up after him.

"Put de mains'l on her—heave her short—jump!" bellowed Bahama Bill, at the same time casting off the gaskets from the boom and throwing the becketts off the wheel.

A Dutchman, Heldron by name, and a Conch called Sam, sprang to obey. The sail went quickly up with a clucking of blocks and snapping of canvas. Then in came the anchor, the three men hauling line with a will. One man loosed the jib while another sent it up with a rush, and just as the sweeping strokes of a pursuing oar fell upon their ears the *Seahorse* stood out the nor'-west passage and to sea.

"Where's Sanders?" asked the mate.

"Oh, de cap'n, he dun take de mon' he get an' go to Tampa on de steamer this night. He say he goin' to do some-t'in' to dem big hotels Mr. Flagler builds—dem dat run de gamblin'-houses. Won't be back fer a week."

"Cap," said Bahama Bill, casting Smart adrift, "yo' kin go below an' put

dat money in de co'ner of de right-han' locker—no use yo' tryin' to swim away wid it. Yo' an' me is goin' to the Bank fer a bit o' work—dat's it, Sam, hook de boat as we come past—pass de painter aft, an' let her tow."

Smart saw that he was caught fair enough. To resist was only to make more trouble. He was broke, anyway, and without a berth. He might just as well try wrecking for a change—why not? Yes, he would go below and turn in without more ado. He had forgotten the money he had taken from the game at Journegan's, the money which belonged to the mate of the *Seahorse*. No wonder Bahama Bill had jumped in after him and brought him aboard. It was easy to see that in spite of all Bill's apparent carelessness he took no chances as he saw them. The *Seahorse* was standing out, and there was no chance of spending the night in the lockup. After all, it was pleasanter out here in the brisk sea air, even in the company of such men. He went slowly below.

"Turn in the po't bunk, cap," came the mate's big voice down the cuddy.

Smart did so, and he fell asleep while the wrecking-sloop rose and plunged into the short sea.

VI.

"I reckon we're about dar, cap. Dem masts stickin' up yander air de fo' an' main' o' de brig *Bulldog*. We skinned her clean, took a share ob de salvage, an' cleared fo' town." Thus Bahama Bill, resting one hand upon the wheel-spokes to hold the *Seahorse* and sprawling upon the deck. The sloop was approaching the edge of the Great Bahama Bank, and the shoaling water told of the coral bottom.

"Well, what are you going to stop here for, then?" asked Smart. Although he had decided to cast in his lot with Bahama Bill temporarily he was averse to wandering about on the old *Seahorse* for any length of time. He was anxious to hunt a berth as navigator upon some ship of size. Nassau was close at hand, not fifty miles away,

and there were many ships stopping there.

"I'll tell yo', cap—I'll tell yo' jest what I want yo' to do fer me," said the big black. He rounded the sloop to, and Sam let go the anchor, while the Dutchman Heldron hauled down the jib.

The *Seahorse* dropped back with the sweep of the current and wind, until she lay just over the mainmast of a sunken brig, which stuck out of the water at a slant, the top coming clear some twenty feet to port of her. The wreck was lying upon her bilge and heeled over at a sharp angle, the partners of the mainmast being about ten feet below the surface.

"I heard yo' tell Stormalong Journegan you'd been down in a diving-suit, de kind dey use in de No'th—hey? Yo' know about rubber suits an' pumps?" He looked keenly at Captain Smart while the seaman told him that he had heard aright. He had been in suits, and helped others diving in them. He thought he knew something about air-pumps.

The mate went below forward, and shortly came on deck with a complete rubber diving-suit, helmet, and weighted shoes.

"I don't go in much fer dis kind ob divin'," said he, "but I dun paid a fellow a hundred dollars fer de whole suit. Show me how to work it, an' show me how dat pump works. Ef yo' do, we'll go halves—break even—on what I think is below in dis hear wrack. I knowed yo' must know something erbout divin'—dat is, erbout rubber divin', which ain't divin' at all, but dat's what I want ter know."

"I thought you said the wreck was finished with?" Smart commented.

"All de money, all de coin was got out ob her, yas, suh, dat's all straight, but dishar wrack ain't been under water more'n a few months, an' I been thinkin' dat maybe some hard work would tell on some cases of ammunition left in her."

"What did she have?"

"Rifles, money, and provisions for Vensuela—some ob dem revolutionists

had de charter. Dey took up de rifles, and dey took up de money, but dey left a lot ob ammunition in her, sayin' it ain't no good. Well, suh, I got a hole in mah shoulder where one ob dem bullets came troo—yo' mind de little fracas at Stormalong's. I dun sold a feller a dozen boxes ob dem ca'tridges, de onliest .45's in Key West. Dat's de reason I cum to know somethin' about dem. Ef dey kin mak' a hole in me, dey kin mak' a hole in mos' enny one, I reckon—hey, what?"

"I see," said Smart. "And that's the reason you wanted me to help you out? You want me to help dive for the goods. How much is there—and how were they put up? They won't stay forever any good under water, you know."

"Dey were put up in tins too big to handle, goin' naked like I dives. De cases were mighty big, an' I don't care much erbout smashin' 'em up wid de 'tarnal things ready to go off. I knows where dey is—way back in de lazarette 'way back aft, an' I knows dat dere's erbout a millun ob dem."

Smart had been overhauling the suit and found it to be in fair condition. Evidently some hard-up diver had sold out to Bahama Bill, who always went naked as deep as three or four fathoms, and could stay long enough under to do the ordinary work required of divers upon vessels on the reef. He could make two or three minutes' work at short intervals, and being a mighty man, the strain told upon him very little indeed.

The rubber part of the suit was just about right for a man of Smart's build. It would not begin to go upon the giant frame of Bahama Bill. The great mate of the wrecker very well knew it, and he knew also that he could never get any of his men to go down in it. They knew nothing about such gear, and the very sight of it filled them with dread. It was up to Captain Smart to make the effort, if effort there was to be made.

In the meantime Bahama Bill would go down once or twice to locate the place in the wreck to work upon. It would require careful work not to ex-

plode the cases in blowing out a hole in the bilge to make an entry; further, it was impossible to think of going down the hatchway aft, for the distance was too great.

It was upon this vessel that the mate of the *Seahorse* had had trouble before, being chased into her by a shark and barely escaping with his life. He knew her pretty well, and could locate the ammunition in a couple of dives. After that Smart could take his time in four fathoms and work the stuff out to hoist aboard, using as little dynamite as possible.

"How about the pump?" asked Smart, after he had overhauled the suit.

The machine was brought on deck. It was dirty and much out of order, but after an hour's work he had it so it could be relied upon for the shallow water. For greater pressure than four fathoms he would not have cared to test it with himself upon the bottom.

While he was refitting it the mate stripped and stood upon the rail ready for the plunge. The water was clear and the bottom could plainly be seen, the varicolored marine growths making it most beautiful.

Bahama Bill dropped outboard, and went down with a plunge so light that he hardly disturbed the surface. The others, watching, saw him swim rapidly down under the bends of the wrecked ship, leaving a thin trail of bubbles.

He was only down a few moments this dive, and came rising rapidly to the surface, his ugly face showing through the clear liquid, his eyes wide open and gazing upward.

"Gimme a piece ob chalk, Sam," he said, as he came into the air again.

A piece was handed him, and he went below again and marked the spot where the hole would be blown in the vessel's side, and in the meantime Smart donned the diving-suit.

The Dutchman Heldron had never even seen a suit of this kind before, and his messmate Sam gazed at it with a sort of superstitious dread.

"Yo' sure ain't goin' under in that outfit, cap?" he protested, as Smart put

on the shoes weighing fully twenty pounds apiece. "Man, them slippers will sure hold you to the bottom!"

"I guess you dummies will have sense enough to haul me up when I pull the line and signal," remarked Smart. "Now, give me the helmet and screw down these bolts." He had the head-piece on by the time Bahama Bill came on deck and surveyed the proceedings.

"I'll have to trust you to tend the lines," said Smart to the black giant. "Remember, now, one strong pull and you haul me up—not quickly unless I give three quick pulls afterward. Two pulls is to slack away, one on the hose is to give me more air, and two to give me less. Understand?"

Bahama Bill wiped the water out of his bleary eyes and nodded. He apparently had some misgivings about the concern, but he was far too careless of human life to express them. He coupled up the air-hose and started the pump, and the whistling inside the helmet told of the wind coming in behind the diver's head.

Smart held the front glass ready, and after being satisfied that the machine was working, he had Sam screw it on and Captain Smart was cut off from the wrecker's crew, his face showing dimly through the thick glass plate. The heavy leaden belt was fastened tightly about his waist and he stepped over the rail onto the little side ladder, and so overboard, letting himself slowly down until he swung clear of the sloop's side. Then he was lowered away and went to the bottom, Bahama Bill slacking off the life-line and hose until he saw him standing upon the coral bank some twenty-five feet below the wrecker's deck.

Heldron turned the air-pump and Sam made fast the charge of dynamite, fixing the wires of a "Farmer's Machine" into the mercury-exploder and wrapping the whole tightly in canvas made fast with marline, the whole weighted so that it would sink quickly.

He lowered the charge, and saw Smart's hand go out and receive it. Then the diver disappeared under the bilge of the wreck, leaving a thin trail

of boiling water just over his head to tell of the escapement of the air.

VII.

Having fixed the charge where the mate had marked the surface of the wreck, Smart started to walk away. The light was strong in the clear water, and he gazed about him at the beautiful coral formations. The heavy growths took on many-colored hues, and he walked out among them to admire them as one would the scenery on shore.

An albacore darted past like a flash of silver light. In the shadow of a huge sponge an enormous grouper took shelter, his eyes sticking out and gazing unwinkingly at the apparition of the man upon the bottom.

Smart went toward him and gave him a gentle poke, and in doing so gave the lines a sudden jerk. Instantly he was lifted off his feet and drawn upward, for Bahama Bill had felt the pull, and lost no time hauling his man aboard. Luckily the depth was not great, or the sudden change of pressure would have hurt.

Smart came to the side gesticulating wildly, and the more he waved his hands the quicker he was yanked up. In a moment the mate had him on deck, and was unscrewing the front glass.

"What's de matter, cap?" he asked anxiously, when the diver's face appeared.

"Nothing; you fellows make me tired!" said Smart. "Go ahead and fire the charge."

The spark was sent along the wire, and a dull crack sounded from below. The water rose in a boiling mass astern, and spread out, churning and bubbling. It was not a large charge, and it had not been necessary to move the sloop.

Smart started Heldron again at the pump, and screwed on the glass. Then, taking his tools and a line, he went back to the work below.

The hole blown in the wrecked hull was quite large for the amount of powder used, but the splintered edges

made it necessary to be careful on entering, on account of the air-hose and line. A swirling of disturbed water still made the light bad, but Smart, feeling the edges with his hand, stepped within the darkness, and proceeded to explore the interior of the lost ship.

He climbed slowly upward, dragging his lines after him, and stumbling over a mass of timber which obstructed the way. He was in the after-part of the brig, the part where the dead wood, narrowing toward the stern-post, made a difficult passage to go through. He went along carefully, feeling for dangerous projections which might entangle his air-hose. The ammunition was supposed to be in the lazarette, under the cabin flooring, and he made his way in this direction.

Owing to the darkness, he was some time locating anything in the way of cases. Finally, however, he felt the square ends of boxes, and made haste to break one open. There were cans of tomatoes, or some kind of food, in the first one, and he felt along farther. Then he came in contact with a bulkhead. As it was inky dark below in the bilge of the sunken ship, he had to do all his work by means of the sense of touch alone. He couldn't see his own hand upon the glass of his helmet.

Something brushed against him and nearly upset him. It gave him an uncomfortable feeling, and a longing for the sunshine upon the sea floor of the Bank. He was not of a nervous temperament, and he knew that some sea denizen had evidently made the brig his home. Perhaps some spawning grouper or huge jew-fish.

Feeling along the bulkhead, he came upon a lot of small boxes. One of these he took under his arm and backed slowly out of the hole and into the clear water of the Bank. He laid the box upon the sea floor, and broke the covering with his hammer, hitting it lightly, the resisting power of the surrounding medium making it difficult even to strike at all. He tore away the fragments of the lid, and saw rows of cartridge-clips, the whole fixed and packed carefully. Making fast a line to the

case, he signaled to hoist away, and brought his find to the surface.

The stuff proved to be all right. On breaking open a cartridge, the powder appeared dry, in spite of the long submergence, showing how carefully the ammunition had been put up. The dipping of the bullets into tallow had made the cartridge absolutely air-tight, and they were as good as new.

The usual cost of ammunition was about two cents per cartridge wholesale. Half a million rounds would make quite a fortune, or something in the neighborhood of ten thousand dollars to divide between himself and the black mate. Yes, it had been worth while, after all. Wrecking was not such a bad thing, if there was anything worth wrecking, and he wondered how the salvors of the brig had overlooked such a valuable asset. Even if he had to divide with the former owners—which he probably would not—he would have something worth going below for.

"Git de stuff—we'll ship him to Noo York," said Bill. "Ought to cl'ar a bit on dis hear deal. Dey's got the Winchester mark on dem, an' dat goes wid de agents, so do de Union ca'tridge. Git de stuff outen her, cap, fo' we cayn't stay here long—it's comin' on bad befo' dark, an' dere'll be too much sea to work agin' fer a week."

Smart lost no time getting back to the lazarette of the brig. He took his line with him, and, after fastening it to some of the cases, he signaled to haul away.

Case after case he removed in this manner, and, after being below nearly an hour, he began to feel the effects of the pressure. He concluded to go up and rest for a short time before finishing the job. He hauled a lot of boxes together and lashed them firmly with a line, and signaled to haul away. He felt the pull, the tautening of the rope, and the cases slipped from under his hand. He straightened up and started to follow.

Then he felt the whole side of the ship suddenly fall toward him. It seemed like a mass of stuff, chest upon

chest, toppling down upon him, and, before he could make even the slightest movement to get away, the whole pile of cases rolled over him like a great wave.

He was thrown upon his back, and a heavy weight rested upon the lower part of his body. He tried to move, and found himself jammed fast. Feeling nervously for his life-line and hose, he saw they were clear. He would not suffocate for a while, anyway. He pulled lustily upon his life-line, and felt the strain of Bill's strength upon it, but it failed to move him. He was afraid the line would cut into his suit with the enormous strain.

He pulled the signal to slack away, but the men above were evidently excited, and they pulled all the harder. Then came a sudden slacking. He reached up and drew in the end of the life-line. It had parted near his helmet.

In the blackness of the sunken wreck Smart felt his nerve going. It was a bad place to have trouble. There was no other suit, no other machine or outfit for a man to go to his assistance. He might live for an hour longer, or perhaps even two, but the end seemed certain unless he could free himself from the mass of cargo which had so suddenly piled down upon him.

It had been one of those accidents which are likely to happen to any one working in the darkness of a ship's hold where the cargo is not known, or not located by previous knowledge of the ship's loading.

He had evidently unshipped some of the ammunition-cases, and brought a mass of boxes of both provisions and cartridges upon him like an avalanche. His right arm was free, but his left was crushed under some mighty weight, and hurt him painfully. The air still whistled into his head-piece, showing that Heldron was working the pump steadily.

Bahama Bill was a cool hand, a man used to desperate emergencies, and Smart felt that the giant mate of the *Seahorse* would do what he could to set him free. He knew the black diver to be a mighty swimmer. He had

cause to remember that fact, but it was far away from the surface where he now lay, and it looked as if he would have to pass in, to die the terrible death of the lost diver.

His imagination held him thinking, in spite of the pain and weight upon him. He could breathe easily, and the numbing effect of the pressure made his sufferings less than otherwise. He tried again and again to shift some of the cases, straining until the stars flashed into the darkness before him. It was useless. He could not budge anything.

The minutes seemed hours, and he began at last to feel the drowsy effect of the air too long driven into his lungs. He saw the beach, the white coral sand—then he was again at Key West.

VIII.

Upon the deck of the *Seahorse* the men gazed blankly at each other when Bahama Bill hauled up the life-line, parted far below. Heldron stopped pumping, and Sam gave an exclamation.

"Keep dat pump workin'; keep it goin', I tell yo'," snapped the black mate, turning upon his man.

Heldron instantly turned away again, rapidly, sending the air below.

"Name ob de Lord—now whatcher make wid dat?" said Bill, looking at Sam.

"Gone fer sure," said Sam. "I wouldn't go down in them lead shoes for no money. I done knowed something like this would happen."

"I t'ink I don't need to give no more air, den," said Heldron.

"You turn dat pump, yo' blamed Dutchman, or I'll turn yo' hide wrong-side out, yo' hear me," snarled the mate. "Gimme a heavy line, Sam; gimme something I can't break—jump, yo Conch!"

"Goin' after him?" asked Sam, hauling the end of the mainsheet clear to the rail. "I don't think you kin get him. Better leave him down; them shoes is enough to hold him. I'd hate

to lose the cap'n, but he's gone for sure!"

The huge form of the mate balanced for an instant upon the rail. He cleared enough line to take to the bottom, and had Sam stand with coils of it ready to pay out. Then down he went with the end of it, swimming strongly for the hole in the bilge of the brig. The opening showed before him, but he hesitated not a moment. He swam straight into the black hole, butting his head against the car-lines under the half-deck, but keeping straight as he could for the diver by following the air-hose with his hand.

It was a long swim to the place where Smart lay. A full minute had been taken up before the mate felt the contact of the metal helmet. He passed the heavy line under it, but found his wind giving way under the strain. Quickly following the air-hose out, he struggled for the clear water, and came to the surface with a blow like a grampus. He had been down two minutes and a half.

Sam seized his hand and helped him aboard, where he lay upon the deck, bleeding, a slight trickle from the corner of his ugly mouth and from his nose.

"You can't make it, Bill," Sam declared. "Let the poor devil go. You done the best you could."

"I stop now wid de air, hey? W'at you says, Mr. Bill?"

Heldron's query aroused Bahama Bill. "If you slack up on dat pump, yo' dies a wuss death 'n Cap'n Smart," he said wearily, and in an even tone. It was evident that the strain had been hard on him, but he was game.

In a minute he sat up.

"I get him dis hear time," he growled, shaking himself and standing upon the rail again.

His giant, black body twitched, the huge muscles under the ebony skin worked, flowing, contracting, and slackening up, making a wavelike motion, but showing the mighty power which lay in his frame. He was getting worked up to a nervous pitch, and the trembling was not from weakness. It was

the gathering power in his thews which was beginning to work.

He flung far out, and dropped straight downward with a pitch-pole plunge, going furiously down like some monstrous sea-demon. Only a flash of his black body showed before he had turned the bend, and was following the air-hose into the hole.

This time he saved many seconds. He reached the form of Smart, and caught the end of the mainsheet about him, quickly slipping a hitch. Then he hauled himself out into the sunshine again, and came rising like a fish to the surface. In a moment he was back aboard the *Seahorse*, and then he spoke.

"Git onto dat line, yo', Sam . . . git hold quick . . . I got him . . . give him de air, yo' Dutchman. . . . An' now fer a heave what is a heave."

With a mighty effort the two men threw their whole weight upon the line. It held. Nothing gave for a moment. Bahama Bill, bracing his naked feet upon the rail, bent his mighty loins, and took a deep breath.

"Heave-ho!" he bellowed, and set his muscles to the strain.

Sam lifted with all his force. Almost instantly the two of them plunged backward, and fell over each other on deck. The line became slack, but before they could get to their feet, Heldron had left the pump and was hauling in hand-over-hand, and in a moment the form of Smart showed below the surface.

The black mate sprang to his feet and gave the Dutchman a cuff which sent him over the side, and, seizing the line, he hauled the limp form of the diver on deck quicker than it takes to tell it. In a moment he had the glass off the helmet, and was staring into the white face of the insensible seaman.

"Get somethin' to drink—quick," he said.

Sam rushed for a dipper of water, and, upon bringing it, was knocked over the head with it for his pains.

"Yo' bring me somethin'—quick—

yo' understand," roared the mate. "I knows yo' got some forrads—now, then, jump!"

Sam quickly brought a bottle of gin, half-full. Smart had some of the fiery liquid poured between his lips. Then Heldron, who had scrambled back aboard, cursing and spluttering, came aft, and helped them to get off the suit.

It was half an hour afterward before the captain came around enough to tell what had happened. His left arm was badly mashed, but not broken. The heavy suit had not been cut through, and to this fact he owed his life. His legs were stiff and sore from the heavy weight which had lain upon them, but he was otherwise uninjured.

"I reckon yo'll be able to get down

ag'in in a little while," said the mate. "We got most of the stuff, I reckon, but we might as well take all dat's dere."

"How many cases have we?" asked Smart.

"'Bout fifty—nearly a million rounds, an' all good."

"Well, that's all we'll get to-day," said Smart, "unless you want to take a try at it."

"Toe bad, toe bad," muttered Bahama Bill. "I'se sho sorry you's sech a puny little man, cap, but de wedder is gittin' bad, ennyways, an' I reckon we might as well make a slant fer Nasau."

"That'll about suit me, all right," said Smart.



AT THE INFORMATION BUREAU

HE stepped aboard the train, a thin, hungry-looking man, with an inquisitive cast of countenance, and he had a long nose, which characterized his love for poking it into other people's affairs. He glanced about him doubtfully, and finally sat down beside a quiet but humorous-looking man in a loud check suit. "Going far, mister?" asked the long-nosed individual.

The man addressed closely scrutinized the questioner, summed him up, and answered thus:

"Yes; I'm going to Philadelphia, and farther just as soon as I can get away. I'm a commercial traveler; my business is to sell everything I deal in, and to get orders for more. I left Boston this morning at 8:15, but we were nearly forty minutes late in starting. No, there was no wreck on the line. My breakfast this morning cost fifty cents, and ten cents for the waiter. The cigar I'm smoking is a ten-cent one. My name is Thomas Britton, and I am thirty-eight and a half years old. My wife's name is Emma Maria. We have four children, three boys and a girl, and I am a member of the Volunteer Firemen's Association in my native town. I am worth about ten thousand dollars—oh! and while I think of it, my wife's maiden name was Barlow, and had money when I married her. My father was a pork-butcher, and my grandfather a sea-captain. That's all I can think of just for the moment, but, if there's any other information about my affairs I can give you, don't hesitate to ask."

Then the inquisitive man leaned forward.

"What did your great-grandfather do for a living?" he asked.

Plantagenet Hock: Hero

By George Bronson-Howard

Author of "Adventurers Extraordinary," Etc.

III.—THE CUSTOM OF THE COUNTRY

(A Complete Story)



CHOPENHAUER says (if he didn't Nietzsche did) that "when a man lets his emotions overcome him, he puts himself at the mercy of somebody." And if Nietzsche didn't say

this, I do. Let it stand that way—Plantagenet Hock says so. I can vouch for that quotation. If I haven't said it beforehand, I say it now; in order that no bespectacled pedant can look it up and call me a gentle toyer with the truth.

But, anyway, the moral of the whole thing is, don't have any emotions. That sounds easy, doesn't it? I've heard about these strong, silent men myself. They wander through the pages of our best fiction making you want to heave a brick at their heads. They smile tolerantly, and wave their hands, dismissing subjects; also they shrug their shoulders. Meanwhile their faces are impassive. As I say, they inspire a great dislike in me.

I've generally found that when a man is strong he contrives to let you into the secret; and when he is silent he is that way because he hasn't got anything to say. Great men are always very tiresome (that is, the ones I've met). They either expect you to bow the knee and look as though you wanted another helping of dessert which you didn't think you'd get; or else they'll get insulted because you don't look that way, thinking you're not onto their greatness.

That brings me right in line with two things, for you see I let my emotions overcome me in the presence of what the world calls a great man. I might have stayed on Ashburton's yacht and been landed nicely and conveniently at Cebu, or some place where you can get a bath and a dash of whisky-and-lemon. But oh, no! I had to get the bat into my belfry that the gentleman had insulted me (he had, by the way). And I indignantly requested to be immediately landed from his floating palace.

Mr. Ashburton didn't see it that way. He said he didn't have any pilot, and he was afraid to try to make a landing that night. "But," he remarks, "if you yearn so remarkably to be put down again on the uncivilized coast of northern Cebu, far be it from R. T. Ashburton to keep Willie from his sweetmeats." Or words to that effect. Being a great man, he was ponderous. Very generously he offered to swing over one of the ship's boats, stock it with provisions, give me a gun, and let me make shore myself. Well, as the shore was only about a mile or so away, I cried him gramercy; and lo and behold! quick as a wink the thing was done.

I've told you all about Ashburton and little Miss Ashburton (whom some space-rater tagged "The Silver Princess") before; also that I wanted to land at Juo and run some of those gun-smuggling deals to earth. Everybody knows I went to the Philippines for the *Clarion*, of New York, most especially to find out what the chances

for a revolution were. And, having had the coast of northern Cebu suggested as the place where a crop of merry young hell had been sowed, I had gone there to look into the reaping.

But that's all ancient history. The main point at the present time is that, owing to the fact that I indulged in the luxury of emotions at the expense of business, I found myself in a ship's boat floating in the straits that separate Cebu from Negros, and paddling with all my lusty young strength for the shore.

The yacht passed on its way, its lights winking at me and telling me the particular kind of an ass I was. Incidentally I was making some few remarks of the same character to myself. The conversation did not partake of the complimentary. It sounded more like rival candidates slanging one another. It is a trivial fact, but I mention it, that the tide was going out, and I was working against it, which meant that I was being carried out farther and farther from shore every time I pulled at the oars.

And over there on Cebu I could see a lot of yellow lights, and almost hear the people twanging on their guitars and singing some of their ten-year-old Madrid successes. At least I thought I could; but then I have an imagination that works overtime. The Southern Cross was doing business at the old stand up there over the palm-trees; and the water looked like one of those crystals you gaze in to find out the name of your future wife. A lot of fireflies and glowworms were palpitating all over with pride, and showing their nice dress suits of orange-colored flame; and altogether that shore looked pretty good to young Plantagenet Hock.

A bright idea occurring to that same rising genius, he reflects for some minutes; and decides he will work up-shore with the tide. To that end I bring the boat around and try the game; but is there anything doing? I answer that there is not. There is most distinctly nothing doing. I wanted to work up-shore toward the lights. The tide shows a perverted inclination to

carry me down-shore. Now I don't like to be harsh, but I am quite sure that if I had wanted to go down-shore that tide would have fixed it so I would have gone up. That's the kind of a tide it was. It was like everything in or around or connected with those islands.

Pretty soon I realized that I was simply raising blisters on my hands and doing myself no good and the tide no harm. So I shipped my oars, lighted one of Mr. R. T. Ashburton's particular pet brand of cigars; and told the tide to go ahead and do what it jolly well pleased. I tried to show it that such a thing as a tide could not affect me in the slightest; that, after all, I might as well go south as north. It was really no particular matter.

So there I sat and smoked my cigar, and continued to hand myself parcels of unfumigated language that would have been refused admittance at any respectable port without an application of formaldehyde.

Viewing myself from a philosophical standpoint, I appeared to be the sort of person whom Schopenhauer, or Nietzsche, would not have hired to sweep out their rooms (provided they ever did have their rooms swept). Not that I have ever yearned to sweep out their rooms. But I would like to have felt that I could have had the job if I wanted it. But if those great philosophers and tanks had been told of my actions during the past twenty-four hours, the very sight of me would have turned them blue with rage. They would have to be fastened in strait-jackets to keep from putting me in a condition that would necessitate my wearing a wig.

Well, anyhow, it wasn't my fault. It was fate, that's what it was. Did I ever go and hunt up trouble in the shape of a female in distress? Come again, Rollo. But was there ever a female in distress within twenty-five miles of P. Hock, Esq., that the Wraith of Romance didn't manage to put in a hurry-up call that sent me in the direction of the happening? Do you think *I like* romance? Ha, gentle reader (I call you

that because it sounds literary and flatters you), never ask me that painful question again. *Like it?* I detest its very name. I have never read a romance. I have lived a decent life, or, rather, it would have been decent if I'd had anything to do with it. But, oh, no! Mr. Romance Wraith has to cross my path with a dark lady—or a blonde—or a red-haired one—or an albino—or— Well, I might as well tell you that I've had experience with every different kind of hair that ever adorned a female's head.

Think of it! A little, tow-haired man wearing spectacles and liking Pittsburg stogies, the German philosophers, and French bonbons. There you have Plantagenet Hock, my friends. Isn't that a nice sort of a hero for a romance? I can see all of you japing now.

"Why," say you, "the heroine would burst out laughing right in the middle of the big scene!"

But they don't, confound 'em! I wish they did. And why don't they? Because they haven't got a sense of humor, that's why. If they had they'd never call on such a being as Planty Hock to get them out of trouble.

But do you realize that before I was nineteen I had rescued so many maidens from trouble that I had to go into a gymnasium and train? I saw that if that sort of thing was going to keep up, I'd have to be able to hand out a few swift punches. And if any man loathes dumb-bells and calisthenics it is myself; and yet to what shame have I been reduced? Why, only the other day my old instructor started a graft of teaching physical culture through the magazines. And he had the colossal ice-box nerve to put a full page in all the leading monthlies, giving such details as:

Mr. Plantagenet Hock, the famous correspondent, is to-day a living example of my theory of muscle-making? Below I present two pictures of Mr. Hock. One when he first came to me, thin, flabby, anemic. The other after six months of—

Well, never mind! But such things rankle. Think of the joke of it! Me,

Planty Hock, who loathes all forms of muscular development advertised to catch easy-marks who want to beat Sandow's record!

Sorrow! I think some day somebody will pose me for that subject and produce a masterpiece. I am the original "it." Old man Trouble and I have slept together so long that I don't know which is he and which is me. (It rimes if I say "me" instead of "I"; but I don't want any yaps to call me down on my Lindley Murray; therefore this addendum.)

Well, to come back to my present situation. There was I in that nice little boat swinging to and fro, caressed by the balmy night air—and all that sort of rot. It was dreamy, poetical, very sweet, and cute. But it didn't make any hit with me. I am not a poet.

How far the tide carried me before it decided to let me get to shore is not a matter that I can reckon up for you. It is my firm belief that it had no intention of landing me at all; but, after I'd been something like an hour afloat, there loomed up before me a long, narrow strip of land jutting out into the water and adorned with the usual "property" palms and white sands, the calcium-man working the moonlight from behind and getting it ready for the star, Plantagenet Hock, who was presently to leap ashore and take a bath in it. For my particular friend (oh, for a swot at him!) the Romance Wraith had doped up a beautiful little three-act comedy-drama, the first act of which was to be enacted on that strip of land partly surrounded by water.

Of course you can see that the land in question—peninsula an F. R. G. S. would call it—got in the way of the tide and interfered. Consequently my little boat ran smack ashore, and it didn't take me more than about two minutes to have it pulled up between two rocks where the waves couldn't get a smell of it. The tide passed on somewhat disappointed, while I stood on the shore and made insulting remarks to the same. After which I looked about me.

It was an ordinary little stage-plot.

About ten yards of white sand strewn with conch-shells, seaweed, and timber. Adjoining it cocoa and cabbage-palms, wild limes, and sandalwood-trees, all crowding one another so that the forest looked as though if you wanted to get through it you'd have to use an ax. The fireflies were doing the Christmas-candle effect by lighting up the greenery; and the moon feathered the tops of the trees. The rest of the island stood out black; and the sea had enough silver on its top to debase the national currency.

My boat was drawn up between two big rocks, so that when I looked around for it, forgetting, I couldn't see it. When I remembered, it struck me that this would be a most convenient place to go to sleep. It didn't take long after the idea struck me to put it into effect so far as I had anything to do with it. I stretched out in the bottom of the boat and closed my eyes. The rocks came together at the top and shut out the moon. It was nice and dark and comfy.

But just then I heard something that sounded suspiciously like splashing oars. I got on my knees, and, keeping my head below the boat's gunwales, cocked one eye out over the waters. Then I thanked my stars my boat was hidden, for the calcium-man was throwing his lime-rays onto a boat chock full of black brethren.

It was what the Malays call a prao, a big boat, with an outrigger and a leg-o'-mutton sail, aided and abetted by four men on either side and one at the stern working sweeps. And when I say "black brethren," that's what I mean, except that the "brethren" is mere persiflage. Black they were, not brown, nor lemon-colored. The hirsute growth of the brethren was straight and black like an Indian's, and fell over their faces and shoulders. They were neatly and inconspicuously arrayed in breech-clouts that had once been white—what they call *bajogs* out there.

All told, there were about twelve of them; and when they beached the prao, the lot of them jumped out and pulled the boat up, after which they

began to dance and skip about the beach, kicking their long black legs up at the moon, grinning, rolling their eyebrows, and throwing their arms about carelessly.

They did this sort of thing until they were good and tired, and then plumped down on their knees and rubbed their foreheads and put sand on their heads. As a piece of combined chorus work it was eccentric and lacked team-play. They didn't work together, didn't take the same steps, didn't plump down at the same time. However, you can hardly expect a Broadway production out on the northern coast of Cebu, so I had to put up with this punk amateur work for want of better divertisement, hoping that the play would shape up better as we got toward the plot.

We got to it soon enough—too soon for young Planty Hock. I had a dim feeling of uneasiness all along that something was lacking in this cute little production. It was the heroine; and she made her appearance in the boat.

Up to that time I hadn't noticed another one of the Mumbo Jumbos. He was a long-faced old codger, and had his face painted up like a Japanese mask.

He was standing alongside the heroine in the boat. The heroine was bound and helpless (naturally the latter, since the first was true, but this, gentle reader, is the conventional description).

Now you can just figure out for yourself how I felt when I saw that that particular heroine was a white woman. All I want you to do is to figure it out for yourself. That's all. Then take a squint in the direction of young Plantagenet Hock. Here was that bespectacled young man, worn out after the arduous labors of a day and part of a night, preparing to go to sleep.

And then to be confronted with a white woman in the hands of a lot of buck niggers!

Now summon up the situation to your mind—twelve of them all armed with guns, knives, and clubs—opposed to them a young gentleman named Hock, with one Luger pistol, an ammonia-squirt, and an unlimited gall.

But, no!—I said there were twelve. In the omission lay my strength. I had forgotten the pantomime clown in the make-up. Which made thirteen.

You can see their finish, can't you? Thirteen! As soon as I realized their awful handicap, I bucked up.

II.

Now that the situation was somewhat of a very personal one, I began to try to figure out what was up. At first I had been surprised at the color of the bucks; but then I remembered that there were as many different species of men in the Philippines as there were islands. These were Negritos, so named by the Spaniards because of their color. They were somewhat of the same breed as the Igorottes.

Well, there were the thirteen of them; there also was the girl, and likewise there was as much of myself as I could bring to contemplate the situation. From my aerie I took a good long look at the girl. She was white, there was no doubt of that. Olive-tinted I don't deny, brunette in coloring, and lots of very black hair, that fell over her shoulders; but there was a lot of white blood in her, I could see. She might be pure white, she might not; but I couldn't look at her pale little face in the moonlight, and see those big, frightened eyes, without making up my mind that I would be elected to the Kuklux Klan for meritorious service in stamping out colored gentlemen before I let her out of my sight.

But don't you fancy for a moment that I was keen about getting into a mix-up. The thing was forced on me, that was all. If another man had hove in sight who was willing to take over the job, it would have been me—me to the tall growths of the jungle. However, at that moment I was sole representative of the glorious white race, and it was up to me to play the game.

I did some rapid thinking.

Meanwhile four of the bunch waded back in the water, and brought his reverence ashore on their shoulders. I

could see, then, that the said reverence had something very tightly wrapped in his arms; and when he comes ashore and puts that something on the sand, waving his hands about and frowning and making queer noises in his throat, all of the other twelve go down on their knees and twist and turn and burrow, and generally act like escaped inmates of a bug-house, his Nibs meanwhile waving and groaning over his big medicine powwow.

And, say! what do you think that blessed image was?

It's going to make you laugh when I tell you; and maybe you'll doubt the truthfulness of P. Hock; but what I tell you is sure enough Scripture.

Ever seen a puppet-show, with Punch and Judy whacking away at one another? They don't have many of them in the States; but they're all over England and the Continent. Well, this image was our beloved old friend Punch. All you had to do was to push a button and Punch did stunts with his eyeballs. Push another button, and he lolled out his tongue at you. Get busy with a third one, and he twitched his nose and sneered and showed his teeth. That was the limit of what Punch would do for you, no matter how much you prayed to him.

Old Big Medicine had got next to the buttons, and was working them for all he was worth. He stood up there solemn as a supreme court justice when he's fining a trust ten thousand dollars and making believe it ain't a joke. Take Big Medicine to New York and he could get booked on the burlesque circuit—refined knockabout turn; lacking in humor but big on the make-believe.

Soon as the bucks got over their first pious spasm, they hiked off and began to collect all the spare wood they could find on the beach. Big Medicine picked up Punch and put him on top of my rocks. I was expecting some one to stick his nose inside and get one of the Plantagenet Hock punches, very strong, and warranted to intoxicate; but none of them betrayed unseemly curiosity, merely going about and collecting their

wood and piling it before Mr. Punch on the rock.

I could see that their game was to start a fire before Mr. Punch; and I had an idea that they were going to offer up the girl as a sacrifice. Not that I knew this; but I had a sort of hunch that the scheme in view wasn't over-freighted with any joyousness for her. So my plan of procedure was ridiculously simple and easy. I waited until the bucks got a little farther up-shore after their wood, and the old priest was left alone with Mr. Punch. Then I crawled out from behind and quietly brained him with the butt of my Luger pistol. It was one of the neatest jobs of assassination that ever came in my line; and the old geezer bit the sand before he had time to find out whether he had slipped or merely stumbled.

The girl was still in the prao. I picked up the two oars to my boat, grabbed as much of the provisions as I could in the other hand, and took a long breath. Then I beat it to the prao, and chucked the provisions in. I didn't want any chance of pursuit in my own boat, that's why I took the oars. And I found one of them come in mighty handy as a lever to budge the prao. She slipped into deeper water, and I threw my shoulder against her. That was one of the times I said a short prayer of thanksgiving that I'd been to a gymnasium. She dragged along, and the tide caught her; and I waded by her side, still pushing.

By this time the crowd on shore had come back with more wood, and got a line on what was happening. They let out blood-curdling shrieks that sounded like Yale yells, and started lickety-split for the boat. I didn't have time to draw my gun. Two of them had splashed right out to the prao and were for climbing aboard. I knew you couldn't reach a nigger on the head very well, so I banged the first one on the shins and the second on the stomach; and back they went into the water, making noises that an automobile would be ashamed of.

With the oar I dug down on the beach, and gave the boat another shove.

She slid into deeper water; and then the tide really did work for me, and we moved slowly offshore.

But during this interval the whole blamed gang of bucks had waded into the water; and I saw there was only one thing to do. Three shots came near hitting me; and some of them threw bolo-knives, one of which buried itself in the boat's bottom, about half an inch from where the girl lay bound. That decided me. I unshipped my Luger pistol.

There are ten shots in a Luger pistol. Need I say more than that I am a good shot? From all appearances I don't believe there were very many bucks left to worship Mr. Punch.

I was once more adrift. The tide was taking me out to sea. I remembered the girl, leaned over, pulled out the bolo-knife from where it had stuck, and cut her bonds.

Now, my good people, I want to tell you that what happened was against my will, my desires, or—anything connected with me. It made me sorry I had rescued her. It showed me that it is dangerous to do anything for a woman. It—oh, well—damn!

She had no sooner had her arms free than she threw them around me, and pulled me down so hard I fell on the boat planking.

"Ah—*querido mio!*" she breathed in my face; and some more in Spanish, which, translated, means: "Ah, my big, beautiful, dark-eyed hero! My incomparable knight of Castile! My never-to-be-forgotten rescuer! All that there is of poor, humble me is yours——"

And when I released myself and tried to tell her what I thought of her she began to cry.

See what sort of scrapes that Romance Wraith lands me in! Oh, I'd like to get a swot at him—just once!

III.

"Now you listen to me," said I to her. "All this is very well, but it doesn't necessarily follow that because

I got you out of playing an *Iphigenia* part, I'm head-over-heels in love with you. That doesn't follow, I repeat. You grasp me? It is by no means an indication of overwhelming affection because I chose to risk my life for you. No, oh, no. I don't do business that way. If I did, I'd be arrested for bigamy in every State in the Union. I'm an American, and——"

"Mericano all same," she cooed at me. "Me like Mericanos."

I'd been wasting all that explanation, all that lucid, candid explanation. The only word she had grasped was "American." Full of indignation, I burst into an imitation of Spanish.

"*No habla Americano?*" I asked, and continued in that proud and haughty language. "You think——?"

"Mericano—me spik can do. Dagorro all same have got pidgin para Americano. No can do Castellano you mistaire? *Bueno!* Me spik Americano all same this——"

"Oh, no, you won't," said I, with much promptness, again in Spanish. "I can understand you a good deal better when you speak Castellano. So go ahead and do it. How did you get into this mix-up, and what the dickens am I going to do with you, anyhow?"

She started to tell me; but her Spanish was about on a par with her English. She knew a few business phrases and a number of endearing expressions; but when it came to giving me a lucid explanation, the proud hidalgos of Castile would have eaten all the dirt between their coffins and the surface to get out and smash her for the way she murdered their ancient and honorable language.

"What *do* you speak decently?" I asked her, and tried her in French. She gave me the baby stare. Recollecting a few words of Visayan, I tried her with them, and her eyes lit up joyfully. I was sorry I did it, for the next minute came a flow of that barbarous patois, very little of which I had the savvy of, anyhow; and considerably less than nothing when it was thrown at me in bunches.

"Oh, forget it!" I said, in disgust;

and by this time I managed to get the lop-eared sail up. I motioned for her to keep it in position with the rope; but she had already gone to the stern and taken the big sweep, which acted as a steering-wheel for the prao.

"We go my country," she said. "All much good. *Muy bueno*. You savvy? You very handsome, big, brave, good man. *Bueno, grande hombre*. Me likee you, all same, Mist' Americano."

I gave the sail a yank, and got it into position with the sweep. "Look here!" I shouted. "Anybody can look at me and see I'm not big. And as for handsome! Why, if I'd lived in Apollo's time, he'd have destroyed me as an offense to beauty-loving eyes. And brave? Brave, nothing! Do you think I rescued you because I wanted to? I did it because I couldn't help it; and now I'd give a lot if I'd let you alone."

But that didn't do a single bit of good, because she didn't understand it.

Having nothing else to do, I took a good long look at her standing up there on the little half-deck that made the stern and working the sweep to and fro. She was as graceful as a tiger-cat the way her slender body moved to and fro; and her eyes reminded me somewhat of a cat's, too, yellowish-green kind of, very big and hardly having any lashes at all, so they looked at you full and round. Her hair was dead-black and was loose, hanging over her neck and shoulders; and she had a little, red mouth all screwed up in a knot.

More than that, I could see that she'd got the idea in her head that I was the grand "It" in her scheme in life; and that it was going to be a sweet young time ever getting away from her.

"Look here!" said I. "Where are we going?"

I said it over in Spanish, fumbled it in Tagalog, and worked it out in pantomime. She caught on, and told me we were at that moment hitting the waters with the purpose of landing on a little island out in the channel between Cebu and Negros, where her tribe held forth.

I did some more judicious questioning, and found out that the island was

very small, that she was seventeen years old, that her father had been a white man who had been wrecked on the island, and that after his marriage with a native woman he had vamoused and had never since been heard of.

It took a long time to get this out of her. But I was soon on to the proper way to put my questions, and after a while I also discovered that the Negritos who made her captive had descended upon the coast of her island earlier in the evening, had stolen all the goods they could lay their hands on, set fire to a few houses, killed a number of prominent citizens, and took her along in order to show their Punch god they were not ungrateful to him for helping them in their campaign of arson and robbery, but would give him his share in the shape of the most desired young woman on the island. So off they carried her, and in all probabilities she would have been a nice little burnt offering by this time if I hadn't appeared on the scene.

There was one thing you could never accuse that girl of having in her possession. The same was modesty. She didn't scruple to tell me how beautiful she was, and how much she was desired. It appeared that her mother had been living in luxury and affluence ever since the girl had been twelve, for the young *caballeros* of the isle had all handed one another raises in price when it came to getting the girl. Mother must have been a good business woman. She gathered in the sheaves and looked wise, and little daughter continued to grow up and wax more beautiful and the presents got larger and larger.

In this telling we whiled away the journey, and after we'd been about an hour on the water, with the wind blowing steadily for us, we sighted three big praos loaded down to the gunwales with half-naked warriors, who brandished bolos, and offended the air with caterwauls at the sight of us.

They hauled down their sails, and got their oars into business, and came toward our boat at a split-lickety, lickety-split. Some of them chucked a few assorted knives our way.

One of them let loose with an ancient blunderbuss that came near upsetting his boat. I could see right there that young Planty Hock was scheduled for a little more assassination, so I again unshipped my Luger from my belt and sighted her, with the intent of letting a little fresh air into the interior organisms of these fresh young gentlemen who were so careless with their cutlery. But when I aimed it, the girl let out a whoop.

"No, no!" she yelled. "No, no! They are my people come to find me. No shoot. No shoot."

She flung out a long hail of recognition, at which there was much chattering in the boats, and hostilities ceased. In some way she must have apprised them of her escape, for when the first prao came up alongside and fastened with a grappling-hook, nobody seemed to mind me at all.

All of them crowded in and began to chatter and kiss her hands. And those that couldn't get near enough for that, kissed their fingers to her. I could see right there that she was what you would call a society belle on that particular island.

Her friends were attired much in the same way the Negritos had been, except that they wore rope-sandals. They were not black men, these; kind of a dirty russet-shoe effect. Little, wide-nostriled noses, big eyes set on the rims of their faces, and looking as though they were going to pop out, short, black hair, reminding me of the bristles on a boot-brush. Not handsome, according to my way of thinking, but I suppose that's a question of comparison.

They carried old rifles that looked as though suicide and shooting them off were the same thing—big, double-edged bolos, little bolo-knives, and some Malay creeses.

Now, you would have doped it out that these chaps would have been glad I'd saved their young society queen from a badly cooked dinner for a comical little god; but, strange to say, my looks didn't seem to make any hit with them at all. They gave me the stare, as though to intimate that I was an out-

sider, and was butting into their social set: a climber, a *nouveau riche*, a bounder, and, hang it all! why can't you stay where you're wanted?

It didn't bother me at all, because I'd had all the gratefulness I was looking for, anyhow, and it had soured on me, but still it struck me as a trifle peculiar that they weren't even decently civil.

However, I found out the next day why they weren't. But meanwhile they put a crew aboard our prao, turned the noses of their own boats back, and took up with the wind again. The girl crouched down by my side, took my hand, and tickled my ear with her breath. I haven't any doubt she was whispering soft nothings there; but what worried me was how I was going to get off their bally old island once I got on it.

By the time we came to the island, the moon and stars had done a disappearing specialty, and it was so pitch-dark that I hadn't any idea what sort of a joint they put me up against. The girl left me at the door, after throwing her arms around me and kissing me.

"*Manana, querido mio*," she said.

Her words seemed to have a deep significance to her; and as one of the braves had lighted a cocoa-torch, that buss in question was witnessed by some forty young gentlemen prominent in the social life of the island. It wasn't the kiss that I minded, for she had a nice enough mouth to kiss, but I hate to do my sparking before witnesses, particularly when I haven't any serious intentions toward the girl. The law is a funny thing to monkey with, and I don't believe in love-letters or demonstrations of affection in public.

One of the *hombres* informed me that I was to occupy that particular nipa-thatched hut that night, and gave me the cocoa-oil torch to see by; but it stank so infernally that I threw it out of doors.

I found a grass-straw bed; and that was all I was looking for. Being dead-tired, I slept, and if the dead sleep any sounder than I did, they'll never wake up when judgment-day comes.

However, it seemed to be that I hadn't pounded my ear for more than half an hour before somebody tugged at my boot-heels. I kicked at the somebody and cursed him fluently in a number of languages. But he was a determined cuss, and continued to pull until he'd dragged me out of the hut and the sun of early morning was in my eyes. I got up and treated him to another choice assortment of descriptive language; but he only looked at me kind of patheticlike out of his big dog eyes, and smiled depreciatingly, as though I were doing him too much honor.

He was in a pair of short, white drawers and a white jacket. He wore rope-sandals and a big grass-straw hat, and was a trifle taller than the average Filipino. Not a bad-looking barbarian if you lined him up alongside the others of his race. He had short lips that showed a lot of white teeth, and his eyes reminded me of a Newfoundland I used to ride on when I was a kid.

I was feeling all in, out, and down. I had perspired some considerable in those clothes of mine; my face felt caked, my hair tousled, and my mouth had one of those after-an-all-night-poker-session tastes in it, dark-brown with touches of sea-green.

"Look here!" said I to him in Spanish. "I want a bath—bath, you understand. Plenty of water and some clean clothes. What the devil did you wake me up for, anyway?"

He didn't answer the question, but waved his hand toward the sea. It looked pretty nice and inviting, I tell you. The sun evidently hadn't been up long; and all along the beach under the palm-trees where the nipa-shacks were, you could see the wood fires sending smoke upward, and women kneeling over them getting breakfast ready. Same old white sands, palm-trees, pink-and-blue-skies, smell of ylang-ylang in the air.

"Me get you clean clothes," said the dog-eyed man. "English me speak plenty good. Have sail on ships, me, and learn plenty English. You want bath, all same plenty water out there."

I could see any number of people within sight, however, and some of them were women. I explained the fact that their proximity was disquieting to one of a modest and retiring disposition, who was, moreover, not stuck on his shape when presented in the altogether.

"They no care," he said, with the same sad, sweet smile.

Wasn't any use arguing with him, so I shook my clothes, ran down to the beach, and took a long and satisfying dip. When I came out he was ready with a suit of white pajamas and a pair of rope-sandals. I put them on and combed my hair with my fingers.

"Now you all ready," he said to me, "we begin marriage-pidgin."

His words startled me. "What's that about marriage?" I asked him.

"Marry—you and Señorita Ana—you marry all-same. Priest he get ready little church marry you to-day. Everything him all fixed." He shook his head mournfully. "She ver' beautiful, Señorita Ana. You ver' happy man to save beautiful lady."

It didn't take more than a second for me to discover that the girl had doped it out that I was going to marry her, and had in her impulsive Southern way saved me the trouble of arranging the preliminaries.

"But you look here!" I shouted. "I don't want to marry Señorita Ana. I'm not going to marry her. I——"

"Get married all same white men," he explained cheerfully. "All good Catholics us. Have got priest all same."

That, of course, made the prospect much nicer. A native marriage was bad enough: a real Catholic one, one I couldn't wriggle out of without difficulty—oh, Lord!

"I'm not going to marry her," I yelled, stamping up and down.

"No can help," he said, and he looked as though he were going to cry. "No can help. Marriage must do. No can help. *La costumbre de la pais*. It is the custom of the tribe. When man save woman's life, he all-same got to marry her. Tribe have got see pidgin

all *bueno*. Custom always got to be just so. You savvy?"

"No, I don't savvy." I was kicking things right and left on the beach and stubbing my toes nicely. "I don't savvy, and I don't want to savvy. I don't care a hang for the custom of the country. Suppose I refuse to marry the girl?"

"All same get head cut off," was his reply. "Have got law say can do. Nobody ever say he no marry. No cut off heads."

V.

It took me a long time to get it through the dog-eyed man's block that I did not desire to marry this Señorita Ana. He was keener than the average Gugu in grasping it at all. I don't blame him. It appears that the girl had about forty-eleven men all dead eager to get her for their running-mate, and every one of that bunch in the three praos desired to be her legal and loving husband. But I had rescued her, and they couldn't quarrel with the tribes custom; and so that was all there was to it. As for Ana, I guessed being part white she hadn't been overenthusiastic about her little brown brothers; and when she had a chance to marry a sure-enough white man, she was quick to grab at it.

It was a little island, and there weren't more than two hundred in the tribe. The place wasn't of sufficient importance to warrant a white man living there; and even the priest they had was a brown one, educated in the Manila University. They were simple-minded creatures enough, and held to their old customs with too darn much tenacity to suit me.

But there it was: marry the girl or get your head cut off. It might be that they wouldn't cut off my head; but Daborro—that was the name of the dog-eyed man—said they would punish me in some way, most fearfully, and I wasn't a bit inquisitive as to the way.

I discovered during the conversation that Daborro himself was some gone on Ana; and when I showed a little sympathy, he poured out his grief to me and wept on my clean suit. It

appeared that he was a very successful maker of copra, and had accumulated a small hoard of samoleons from trading in the same, carrying the copra to Bacolod and bartering it there.

He was the traveler of the island. He had been a sailor and had deserted in the South Seas, where he worked at making copra among the Kanakas, and was consequently better acquainted with business graft than the others; also he spoke English and Spanish fairly well. He was the *jefe* of the village, and was looked upon as its most prominent citizen. Altogether, he had stood the biggest chance of claiming the hand of the fair Ana until I turned up the night before.

He was quite sad about it; but he didn't have any idea of combating with *la costumbre de la pais*. I advertised his idiocy to him. Then I asked him if there wasn't some way in which I could get out of marrying Ana. I gave him the old dodge about having a wife at home; but he said that wouldn't matter, as I would have to stay on the island. Cute little morality, isn't it? Well, when he threw that down, I gave him instructions to stir up his think-tank for some good reason why I couldn't marry Ana.

"There is only one," he said presently. "You marry her must do. Only one reason why no can do; and that no good. Leper man have got white marks, he no can do. But you no leper."

In about three seconds a fine, beautiful scheme began working its way through my head.

"Have you got any white paint?" I asked him.

He said he had, for painting his boats. We sojourned to his nipa-thatch and he brought me a can of paint and a brush. I daubed some on cheeks and hands and legs. Then I explained the scheme to him. He protested violently.

"No, no," he protested. "She have kiss you. They think you be leper, they think she catch too when she kiss you. So nobody want marry her——"

I explained carefully to the fool idiot that *he* knew I didn't have the leprosy;

that *he* could offer to marry her, making believe he would take all chances because he loved her so much; and that when she saw what he was willing to risk to call her his own little tootsy-wootsy, she would get busy with the osculations and forget all about Planty Hock.

"Now," said I to him, when the idea had penetrated his wooden *cabeza*, "all I ask of you is to take me down to Bacolod and leave me there. This life's getting to be too presidential to suit me. I'm going to turn in and take about five days' sleep."

After that he chucked his arms about me, kissed me on the face, the arms—anywhere he could find bare. He called me so many disgustingly endearing names that he might have been a woman himself.

When I finally quieted him, with a good stout kick, he got busy with breakfast; and after that we hied ourselves to the Ayunamiento, as they had the nerve to call a hut in the center of the village, and word was passed to the priest to ring the bell and get the people together. The chimes were pretty soon going from the church-tower, the only stone building in town, and the people came hurrying into the plaza and toward the big platform outside the Ayunamiento.

They were all diked out in traders' togs: women in red and blue and green muslin wrappers with glass beads in their ears and around their necks, sometimes with a dollar watch as a *pièce de resistance*: men bare from the waist up, but in highly artistic drawers and breech-clouts, with bangles on their legs and loud tattooing on their chests, wearing for the most part derby hats, around which were twisted some sort of red flowers. These same blooms also served to decorate the women's hair.

The church was to the right of the Ayunamiento, and at its door stood the priest in his long robes, waving his hands solemnly while six little brown boys, looking very uncomfortable in stiff white nightgowns, shrilled out some sort of a Latin chant. They paused at intervals to take breath; and

the crowd took up the refrain, droning it out like so many bees.

Then the crowd parted, and an old woman came out of it. Her face was wrinkled and her hair gray. Around her neck hung garlands of the red flowers, and she had togged herself out in a Scotch plaid skirt and narrow velvet slippers. At the sight of her the crowd cheered frantically, and I knew enough of their language to realize that this was the mother of my betrothed.

She saw me, and came across toward me at a run; but meanwhile Dagorro had been getting in his fine work, telling the priest about me, and that dignity gave a jump forward, bowling over two of the boys in nightgowns, and caught her arm.

"Stop, woman!" he said, and by this I realized that he knew and that I had been spared the embarrassment of being stickily embraced by the Señorita Ana's mother.

The girl followed her mother. She had on a white dress, and white flowers were twisted in her hair. On her feet were little red shoes; and these seemed to take up a good deal of her attention. She was evidently proud of those shoes. She raised her eyes to me, blushed, and came forward shyly; but the priest caught her with his other hand.

Dagorro told me afterward what the priest said.

"I have called you together, my children, to celebrate the marriage between the most virtuous and desired Señorita Ana de la Cruz and the Señor Americano who stands before you. . . . I came, my children, with joy in my heart that another white man" (he thought *he* was white) "had elected to come among you, and aid in the welfare of the tribe. . . . I came to render thanks that our beloved daughter had been saved from a shameful death at the hands of the Negritos, and to rejoice with her that she was to wed an illustrious *caballero* of the race of her father. . . . But now I am all sorrow, and my tears are for you and the American señor. Tears for him because the hand of God has been visited upon him; for you, my daughter,

because you must seek elsewhere for a husband. Your noble rescuer cannot marry you——"

Dark scowls became apparent on the faces of the men, and the women shrank away, looking scared. It seemed as though somebody was going to hand young Planty Hock a large package of assorted trouble, collect. They moved a little closer to the balcony where I stood, muttering and scowling at me.

"The custom of the country." "The law of our fathers." "It is the law." "He must obey." "Let him have death if he refuses."

I don't say that their words were exactly that, but that's as literal a translation as I can muster for you.

One of the natives who looked as though he might be some punkin in his own estimation came out of the bunch and stood directly under the balcony, sticking out his skinny brown fingers at me.

"Do you refuse to marry the Señorita Ana?" he yelled.

Dagorro, at my side, translated.

I puffed out my chest and waved my hand. "I do," said I with a certain dignified sadness.

And then there came near to being something doing. Knives flashed, some clubs were brandished, and the bunch rushed the platform. I tried to look as though such things didn't worry me, but my fingers were itching to get on my Luger. Some of the natives ran up the steps of the *balcon* and threatened me with their knives. Women shrieked at me and spat in my direction. The man nearest me swung his rifle up to his shoulder.

"Stop!" yelled the old priest. "Stop! my children!"

"Let him not refuse, then," growled the man who had first spoken.

"My children, stand away! He is one of God's unfortunates. Stand away lest you be contaminated! Mark you not those white blotches upon his face and hands? . . . He is a leper!"

The man with the rifle fell over backward, and two more of them stumbled over him in their anxiety to get

away. You bet they put as much room between me and themselves as they could. Everybody started to talk at once and draw away from the center of the plaza. Before the time it takes a thirsty man to order a beer had passed, they had left my near-bride in the center, all by her little lonesome. Even her mother shook her and backed off.

"She has kissed the leper. She, too, will be a leper! She——"

All that sort of thing. Everybody talking at once.

The square was emptying itself as fast as a theater does when the hero and heroine start to make up in the fourth act. The poor little girl looked like the original maiden all forlorn. There she stood, her face in her hands, sobbing as though her heart was so much cracked chinaware. It looked rotten for her, I'll admit; and I was beginning to feel like a heavy-mustached, glass-pane-in-the-eye villain of Bowery melodrama. If I'd had a cigarette I'd have been so natural that a Chatham Square crowd would have hissed and chucked aged hen's fruit at me. And there by my side stood that ass Dagorro staring like Humpty-Dumpty with those glass-agate eyes of his.

"Go on, you chucklehead," I whispered hoarsely. "This is the psychological moment!"

He stared at me. I translated.

"Get busy with your arm. Kiss her. Go on, you several and many times bejiggered chump."

He savvied by now, and vaulted over the railing. The next second he's up to her, drags her hands away from her eyes, and holds her off at arm's length; then he pulls her to him in a regular *Jose-and-Carmen* long, languorous, and voluptuous embrace.

The crowd that still lingered in the plaza let out several long "Ahs!" of horror and amazement; but when the

girl looks up at Dagorro her eyes were shining like tin dish-pans in the sun. I believe the kid was stuck on Dagorro all along, only my white skin dazzled her for a few seconds. She seemed to have forgotten all about me now, for her eyes had that "lord-and-master" look about them.

The "Ahs!" continue from the crowd. Dagorro turns and faces them scornfully.

"Cowards!" says he. Then he waves his hand to the priest, with one of those lordly and dramatic gestures that come easy to those with fervid Southern temperaments:

"The lady will accept the name of her humble slave. Let the wedding go on!"

VI.

For a day and a half I lived over in a little corner of the island by myself, and put in the good time getting my sleep record back to its normal condition. At the end of that time Dagorro was as good as his word. One of his copra praos was sailing to Bacolod, and he gave me a place on board. The natives didn't like it any too much, but they were in Dagorro's pay and they had to take me along. Just before I put my foot in the boat I turned and asked Dagorro if he was happy.

He indulged in about two pages of rhetoric.

"All right," says I. "I'm glad of it. But you take a hunch from me, Dagorro. Don't you let your wife into that little secret between you and me. Don't try to ease her mind by telling her I wasn't a leper. If you do, you'll cut out the 'Angel-tootsy-wootsy' business and find out that married life is like playing shinny without leg-guards."

With which piece of advice, I bade farewell to the island, and hoped I'd get to Bacolod without anything more happening to me.



A Problem in Motion

By Everard Jack Appleton

Author of "The Sound Machine," "The Invisible 'Iggers," Etc.

The true tale of a reformed press-agent who, temporarily finding himself "on the beach," tackles a very remarkable proposition for the sake of raising the wind, and incidentally makes an astounding scientific discovery



IS it possible that I have never told you of Drury? Drury, the inventor of the only successful perpetual-motion machine? You once remarked that I have known all the great men ever lived, and a few who haven't; but Drury, I assure you, was real; no painted canvas or papier-mâché man, but bone and sinew and brain.

The story of his machine has to do with the fair sex—but don't misunderstand me; their proverbial conversational abilities and the perpetual-motion idea had no significant connection. It is love that makes the world go around, as well as a good many other things; and in this case it did the work for Drury.

I met him by accident; but I cultivated him by intention and design, as a man without a dollar is apt to cultivate a friendly, well-financed chap; and our acquaintance, as it proved, became a mutually beneficial affair.

Let me see! I was ahead of a problem play that year. If my memory does not fail me, it was "Whose Was the Fault?" a melodrama in three acts, seven scenes, two car-loads of scenery and mechanical effects, a cast of six people and eleven trained animals, and a refined society vaudeville act (there are no other vaudeville acts now), between each curtain drop and raise. What was the "problem"? Well, I don't mind saying that for the most of us, it was the question of how to get

back to little old New York at the end of the season without walking; but that is a mere detail—forget it!

We started out with high hopes and highly colored "paper" for the bill-boards; we returned with low spirits and a lot of unpaid board-bills—which simply goes to show the ups and downs of the business. As an artistic, exciting thriller, that drama had the rest of them backed off the stage; but as a financial success, it was a cipher with the rim rubbed out!

The fault, we discovered when it was too late, was with the audiences and not the play. We should have carried our own audience in place of our own scenery, our manager said when it was all over; then we would have filled the house at every performance.

One fine morning, however, I found myself in the little town of Rippemoff, Montana, three days ahead of the show and two weeks behind in salary. I was a trifle nervous that morning, so I wired the manager: "When do I get my salary? Am in need of it."

I was waiting for the answer, when Drury dropped into the hotel. He was a serious young man with a tinge of gray about his temples and an unlighted cigar in his mouth. When it comes to being on the spot with the first aid, I am always the leading man; so I offered him a match, and he took the chair beside me as he lighted his Havana, imported direct from Tampa, Florida. He was about to open the conversation when the clerk tossed me a telegram. It read: "You don't. We need it more," and was signed by the

manager of the show, who had a very coarse idea of what constitutes humor.

"I beg your pardon," said my cigar friend, in a moment, "but from your expression I should judge that message doesn't please you."

"Your deduction is deucedly correct," said I. "This means that I haven't any more job than a snow-shoveler at the equator, and that the money from home has lost its way." Then, in a burst of confidence, I told him the whole thing.

When I had rung down the curtain on my narrative of disappointment, he remarked: "That's tough; downright leathery tough! If you're not too proud to accept favors from a stranger, I'd be glad to have you come over and take pot-luck with me for a while. I'll just settle your tab at this place, and we can trot right along."

Did I say no? Not so emphatically that it jingled the chandelier, believe me!

For three weeks his bachelor quarters were mine. And even after the governor had put another mortgage on the carpenter-shop back home and sent his wayward some soft money, I stayed with Drury. He wouldn't hear to my leaving, although even my hardened conscience waked up once or twice and tried to make me move on. He was kind-hearted and hungry for sympathy, for when he told me his story at the end of the first week, it was plain that he needed friendly regard.

That story was the regulation history of two men and one woman. Only in this case, one of the men was the girl's father. His name was Rogers, and he was the rich man of the town. Drury was a mechanical engineer, with ideas; Rogers was a mercantile crank, without. Drury loved the girl as he did his work—earnestly and thoroughly; Rogers, being one of those sweet characters whose sole aim in life seems to be to make others unhappy, wouldn't allow the young man a square chance to win her.

"When he heard that I had ideas about a perpetual-motion machine," said Drury, "he snorted; then he said the

day my machine proved a success I could have Edith, and not before. That was two years ago; I have worked on it night and day ever since, and I am about crazy; but I will get it, or die in the attempt."

"My dear boy," said I, "that is medieval talk. The modern lover doesn't think of being killed; he frames up something for the other party, and pushes him into the lime-light when the death-music starts. Keep right ahead with your work, and be cheerful; you'll win!"

We shook hands on that, and went to look at the machine, which he had locked up in his study-safe. It was a complicated affair of shining wheels and levers and axles which I couldn't describe if I wanted to; but it *looked* pretty, and when he pushed the main wheel the thing ran all right. "All he had to do was to get that main wheel, balanced like a fairy's wing, to push itself, said he; and you could see he loved the apparatus right up next to Miss Edith. He was so much in earnest about it that I let him explain the theory; and if any man can do more for a friend than listen to his theories, I don't know what it is.

He wound up with the statement: "It isn't a practical matter at all, and never will be; but if it wins me a wife I guess that would be a success, wouldn't it? I haven't any idea of revolutionizing the mechanical world by starting anything too new to be used; I'm simply going to get that girl, even under the conditions her father makes."

"A perpetual-motion machine and old Side-whiskers' proposition sound all right, Drury," said I, "but have you thought of how you are going to prove that it is a perpetual runner, when you finally strike something that will make that big wheel go? 'Perpetual' means forever, if I read my dictionary right in school."

"Yes," admitted Drury, "we can neither of us sit around and wait forever to see if it runs down; but I believe that after it has been running a week or so, without letting up at all,

the old gentleman will be generous enough to give me the reward, and not insist that I meet him in eternity with the machine under my arm, still going!"

"I hope you're right," said I.

"That machine," said Drury, "lacks absolutely nothing mechanically. All it needs is the correct vibration to start the auroplane, which connects with the main wheel. Vibration is sound; and so far I have been unable to get delicate enough vibrations to start it. Tuning-forks and violin strings are much too coarse; it needs something too delicate to be measured by mechanics."

I looked at him quickly, for his words had given me a regular spot-light idea. I didn't explain it fully to him, but I backed him into a corner and said: "Drury, if you do exactly as I say—exactly, mind you, no matter how you feel about it—I will start that machine for you without touching it myself!"

A man in love is liable to do anything; and he accepted the straw I held out to him.

The next afternoon Miss Rogers and her father were shown into Drury's study. They were there on his invitation but my suggestion. I don't know what pretext he used to get them to come, but they did. The perpetual-motion machine was sitting on a table near the window, and when I came in I took a position near it. Rogers, a heavy-set, heavier-brained old porpoise, occupied Drury's biggest chair, and snorted regularly, like a zoological garden animal. Miss Rogers was visibly embarrassed—but not for long.

"Mr. Rogers," said I, "my name is George Fernorton. I am a stranger in this town, but Mr. Drury knows me, and it was at my solicitation he asked you here this afternoon. I have something of great importance to state, and as it is not pleasant, I will not delay. This machine, which is about complete—which is almost ready to run—is not his invention. It is mine! Mr. Drury has stolen my ideas, but after years of tracking him I have brought him to bay and confront him and you with the truth. Unless a proper amount of

money is forthcoming, I will publish the facts to the world."

I wish you might have seen Miss Rogers when I stopped! Say, the leading lady of "Whose Was the Fault?" was a piece of stage furniture compared to that girl. With her eyes snapping till you could hear them, she rose to her feet, her face as red as a rose for a moment and then white as a lily. If atmosphere was ever charged with electricity—electricity of anger—it was then! I glanced at her, and then fixed my eyes on the machine. One of the wheels stirred, trembled a moment, made a half-revolution, and—stopped! Drury, who was watching the machine, too, raised his head and cleared his throat, but Miss Rogers was before him.

"I do not believe a word of it!" she cried, her voice shaking with rage. "This man, whoever he may be, is an impostor, a blackmailer. Say that he is, Ralph! Tell him and father what I know to be true—that the machine is yours, all yours!"

The silence that intervened was like a wedge of brick ice-cream. You couldn't have cut it with a snow-shovel. Then Drury, with his hands clenched—and I will say he did his part well, for having had no rehearsals—answered in the low, tense voice I had suggested to him:

"But what if it is true, Edith? Suppose I have stolen his ideas and made them mine? Would—would it make any difference in *your* feeling for me?"

It was a hard thing to ask and to do, but Drury's nerve never left him. The chances were even, for and against him—and the machine was waiting. The girl caught her breath and the anger in her face died slowly away. For a minute you could see doubt, dismay, and other emotions working in her mind; then, with a cry of absolute faith and trust and love (which would have made a fortune for her if she had been an actress) she threw herself into his arms.

"I do not care," she said, her hands clasped behind his head. "I love you, I love you, whatever you are!"

Rogers raised his shaggy eyebrows like a cellar door, and stirred in his chair. I held my breath—and watched the machine. And as she finished that brief but intense sentence, spoken with all the ardor of a woman's soul, the wheel that had trembled before began to revolve. One second, two, three, four, it ran; would it stop at the fifth? No! The vibration had been found, and the Drury Perpetual-motion Machine was started!

You can imagine the rest. Drury, standing in the center of the stage, holding Miss Rogers to him and whispering something not even the rest of the cast could hear; Rogers, heavy villain, glowering at them and at the machine alternately; I, smiling with a bless-you-my-children air. And the machine whirring musically along, doing what Drury had insisted it would some day.

Presently he turned to Rogers, one arm about Miss Rogers, and in a voice which rang with triumph, he pointed at the machine.

"There," said he, "is the refutation of his statement—and my vindication. He has no machine, while mine, which is all mine, is running! Perpetual motion is no longer a dream; it is an accomplished fact; and a fact accomplished by Ralph Drury, not George Fernorton!"

That was my cue for a dejected exit, and I made it to the best of my ability, although I had to laugh gleefully myself when I got outside. Drury's invention was a success at last; he had won his sweetheart and established his honesty, all through my little plan. Was I the pleased party? I was!

The explanation? Simple, my dear

fellow, very simple. Knowing, as Drury said, that all ordinary sound-waves were far too coarse to give the machine its start, I hit upon something so much more delicate that it is not measurable, probably—the ether disturbances caused by a woman's emotions. The anger-waves she made were too strong for the machine; that was my first test. But the second trial, which brought out the love-vibrations in full force, struck the key of the machine exactly. It responded immediately—and it has been running ever since.

Old Rogers was a man of his word, and Drury has been a happy bridegroom for six months. I heard from him yesterday, and he said:

"The machine, God bless 'it! is still running, and Edith understands now how it got its start. The other day we had a tiny difference of opinion (on the important question of where to plant a rose-bush in our front yard), and that piece of mechanism began to slow down. We both noticed it, and, realizing the absolute necessity of keeping it going, we made up that quarrel in double-quick time, whereupon it regained its speed. Your solution of my troubles will always leave me your debtor, and I can never thank you adequately for what you did. By the way, I don't know that I told you, but the machine runs backward. Rather odd, isn't it? I haven't any idea why it does that."

That's all he says; but if he had asked me why, I think I know the answer. A woman's love, my boy, is somewhat contrary; and it was a woman's love which started the machine. No wonder it runs backward!

A cocktail? Well, if you insist—yes!



The Red Golf-cape

Being Another Remarkable Adventure in the Life of Tommy Williams, Artist, Hypnotist, and Detective

By J. Kenilworth Egerton

Author of "Cleopatra's Necklace," Etc.

(A Complete Novel)



It is not always easy to reconcile theory and practise, and, although no less an authority than Tennyson has asserted that

'Tis better to have loved
and lost,

Than never to have loved at all,

there was one period in my life when I was firmly convinced that my own particular case was the exception which proved the rule.

Perhaps if one has only pleasant memories of the departed tender passion it may be different, but unfortunately my disillusioning had been a violent one, for the object upon which I had set my affections turned out to be the wife of a forger, masquerading as an unmarried woman to obtain information which would be useful in her husband's peculiar business.

That my own private bank-account escaped and that my eyes were opened to the true character of my charmer were due to the efforts of my lifelong friend Tommy Williams, an artist of no mean ability, possessed of a peculiar knowledge of hypnotism and a faculty of inductive reasoning which had enabled him to solve many puzzling mysteries. As usual, he had become interested in the case at the solicitation of Longley, the assistant district attorney, whom he had assisted in several previous investigations; but as it had

nearly caused a rupture of our friendship—which he was good enough to say meant more to him than the unmasking of all the criminals in New York—he solemnly resolved to have no further dealings with matters outside of his chosen profession.

"And, having reached that very sensible conclusion, I propose that we shut up shop for a bit and take a run across the Atlantic," he continued. "I shouldn't mind seeing what the other fellows are doing in the way of painting, and I think that it might be a profitable as well as a pleasant holiday."

The realization that he made the suggestion because he was anxious to get me away from the associations of New York made me none the less grateful, and I eagerly accepted it. I was depressed, and the old haunts were so hateful to me that I should have been glad to go any place to get out of them, but, as a matter of course, I asked where he proposed going.

"That is a question of little moment, so long as we go some place; always provided that it is out of the reach of Longley and his satellite, Detective-sergeant Clancy," he answered, laughing. "I would suggest Paris, and I notice that the *Celtic* sails on Thursday."

"But that would land us at Liverpool," I objected, and Tommy nodded.

"My dear fellow, that is the best possible starting-place for a trip," he answered. "It implies a journey through

England with a stay of a day or two in London, and after taking that dose in the winter one looks with equanimity upon any vicissitude of weather or travel which may be encountered upon the Continent. It is a prophylactic against future grumbling and discontent."

Tommy's predictions, as usual, were correct. From the time we left Queens-town until we reached the Mersey the ship was involved in a cold, penetrating fog, and our brief stay in Liverpool was long enough to half-congeal the marrow of our bones. The journey to London in a stuffy railway train completed that unpleasant process, and the milder weather of the metropolis was compensated for by a "London Particular," that pall of brown, evil-smelling, all-enveloping mist which periodically during the winter paralyzes the traffic and business of the world's greatest city.

The one bright spot on the dismal, foggy platform was the brilliant scarlet golf-cape of a girl who alighted from the compartment adjoining the one in which we had traveled, and our eyes were naturally attracted to it. Her accent, as she gave directions to the porters about her trunks, proclaimed at once that she was a compatriot, a fact we were glad to acknowledge as we watched her efficiency in identifying her luggage and getting it quickly placed on the top of a waiting hansom, while less capable people were rushing aimlessly from one van to another in the effort to identify missing bags or boxes.

"I always admire any one who can do any one thing well," remarked Tommy, as we drove away at a snail's pace in a four-wheeler, our belongings chained on the top, the ancient jehu piloting an equally ancient horse cautiously through the dense fog. "Now, that girl in the red cape understands the business of traveling. She has apparently just crossed the ocean, but you may have noticed that her luggage was reduced to a minimum, and she knew in just which van it was placed before she entered the train, and wasted no time in an exasperating search for it when

she arrived. She gave the porter his proper tip in coppers, instead of the wasteful one of a shilling, which the American ordinarily bestows, and the pleasant smile which accompanied it made up for the absence of extravagance."

"You seem to have watched her very closely," I remarked, and a distinct and rather aggravating grin was visible on his Mephistophelean face through the curtain of fog as he looked at me.

"Not being misogynistic, for the moment, I acknowledge the soft impeachment, and if you were equally honest you would confess that you noticed that she had an unusually pretty face, that the golf-cape did not conceal the fact that her figure was pleasing, and that she revealed a very small foot and an unexceptionable ankle as she stepped into the hansom," he answered, and as he had practically read my thoughts, I made no denial. "If I thought this cabby and his horse wouldn't die of senility before reaching the Cecil I should be tempted to change our hotel and go there instead of to the Langham," he concluded, and as I had heard the young woman give that direction to her cabman, I asked no questions.

Our stay in London was a short one, but it was amusing to notice how many times Tommy found business which took us to the Cecil. We never caught sight of the girl of the golf-cape, however, and, after we had settled our hotel-bills and were once more on our journey, I ventured a bit of chaff as the four-wheeler sped along to Victoria.

"Yes, I'm confoundedly disappointed that I didn't manage to run across her," he acknowledged frankly. "The best I could do was to find her name from the hotel porter. I know that she is a Miss Roberts, of Pittsburg, but there my information ends."

"Unless there are two golf-capes of that particular shade in London, which I should very much doubt, you stand a further chance of making her acquaintance," I answered, pointing up a street leading from the river. A hansom, with a small steamer-trunk and a suitcase on the roof, was speeding toward

us, and one of the occupants was attired in a brilliant scarlet cape.

"By Jove! that's our fair country-woman, right enough, but she seems to have accumulated a male escort," exclaimed Tommy, and the little evidence of regret in his tone prompted me to look at him closely.

"Not jealous before you have even made her acquaintance, are you?"

"No, but an unprotected female offers chances for acquaintance through the accidents of travel, and I take it we are to be fellow voyagers," he answered, as the hansom swung down through Victoria Street ahead of us. Our luggage condemned us to the slower four-wheeler, and when we reached Victoria the girl was not to be seen.

"It's all right, though," exclaimed Tommy gleefully. "That chap standing at the closed door of the compartment is the one who drove here with her, so she must be traveling alone and he is simply seeing her off. Now watch your Uncle Thomas Williams get busy with bribery and corruption."

A few minutes' earnest conversation with the guard, during which certain coin of the realm seemed to change hands, and a porter carried our hand-luggage to the compartment before which the man was standing. The porter was deaf to his half-indignant protestations, and leisurely stowed the things away in the racks, and I watched the one-sided altercation with amusement while Tommy was registering our heavy luggage. The girl's cavalier was not a particularly attractive-looking individual, and the scowl on his face as he berated the stolid porter was eloquent of ill temper, but as he was evidently not to be her traveling companion I paid slight attention to him.

"I shall give you a clear field," I said, when Tommy rejoined me. "Cigarettes and a good novel in a smoking-compartment appeal more to me than red golf-capes. I'll see you at Dover."

"Burnt children are said to dread the fire," he remarked, with an aggravating grin, "but as it is some time since my fingers were scorched, I am getting over my fear, and I'll take a chance."

Mr. Tommy Williams did not believe in letting the grass grow under his feet, so that I was not surprised to find that he had made considerable progress in his acquaintance with the young woman when the train pulled on to the pier at Dover. He attended to the transfer of her luggage to the steamer, and escorted her across the gangplank as if they were friends of long standing, and, when he had her comfortably ensconced in a sheltered nook behind the paddle-box, motioned for me to come forward and be presented. Another American, whose acquaintance I had made on the train, looked at me a little enviously, and in my heart I secretly wished that he might have the opportunity in my place, but ten minutes later I was regarding the lonely journey from London as one of those lost opportunities which all men have cause to regret.

The passage was not a smooth one, but Miss Roberts was an excellent sailor, and before Calais was sighted I felt as well acquainted as if we had known each other since childhood. She was so simple and unaffected that it seemed almost like talking to a boy, and, apparently thinking it quite natural that her fellow countrymen should look out for her comfort, she accepted the small attentions which we paid her in a spirit of *camaraderie* in which there was no trace of coquetry.

"My family was very much opposed to my coming over here alone to study," she confided to us. "Every one of them seemed to think that I was not able to take care of myself, but I don't think that I shall have any difficulty."

"From the way you hustled things about at Euston when you arrived in London I judged that you had spent most of your life on the wing," said Tommy, laughing. "I don't believe that they would have retained many doubts if they had seen you."

"Yes, but that was in England, where every one understood me," she answered. "I suppose that I shall be perfectly helpless when I land in France, unless you come to my rescue."

"We can safely promise that," said

Tommy gallantly. "Have you made any arrangements about where you are to stop in Paris?"

"Yes, I have rooms engaged at a house recommended by a friend who spent some time there; here is the address." She produced a small address-book from the bag which hung from her belt, and Tommy copied the street and number into his own note-book.

"I shall have to keep an eye on you for a few days, to see that you are getting on all right," he said, as he handed it back to her. "Paris is a queer place for a young, attractive, and unprotected female to land in." The girl accepted the compliment and the expression of interest quite as a matter of course and without the slightest embarrassment.

"Every one is very good to me," she answered gratefully. "That gentleman who brought me to the station this morning went to no end of bother in getting my tickets and finding a compartment for me."

"Which, I am happy to say, was not a reserved one," said Tommy, grinning, and Miss Roberts laughed.

"I can assure you that it was not his fault; his language to that poor porter who insisted upon putting your traps in there was so strong that it made me blush, but I imagine that the man had received a tip of American proportions, which solaced any hurt to his feelings," she said, looking at Tommy mischievously, and he at once acknowledged that he had employed bribery.

"I think it must be my golf-cape which makes friends for me," she continued. "I am afraid that it is very conspicuous, but I can assure you that it is most comfortable in this wind."

"To say nothing of its being most becoming," I ventured, and Tommy raised his eyebrows in mock astonishment at my remark.

Miss Roberts found her way made very smooth for her on the journey to Paris, for we both acted as devoted cavaliers. Of French she had none, which was, perhaps, fortunate; for Tommy's remarks in that idiom to a Frenchman of the masher variety who tried to intrude his attentions upon her at the

custom-house would not have stood literal translation. She apparently understood the general purport, however, for she looked gratefully at her protector and rather ostentatiously took his arm in crossing the platform, as the Frenchman slunk away shamefacedly. She confided to us that she expected to be in Paris for several months, studying singing, and that she had great hopes of getting an engagement in grand opera.

"I wonder how many of our hopeful young countrywomen have come over here with that particular bee buzzing in their bonnets," remarked Tommy, as we drove from the station after safely depositing Miss Roberts and her luggage in a cab. "There were dozens of 'em about when I was studying here, but I haven't seen the accounts of any great successes among them. Little American girls would be far better off if they remained at home and attended a cooking-school, and I don't wonder that these people think we are barbarians when I see the way they are allowed to come over here and go about absolutely without protection."

"But Miss Roberts seems to have been fortunate enough to find a very efficient protector," I answered, and Tommy's slim, white hand caressed his mustache.

"Two of them, I should say, if necessity arose; but she seems fairly capable of taking care of herself," he replied thoughtfully. "Paris is a big city, but our young women seem to get on after a fashion when they learn the ropes. I have asked Miss Roberts to dine with us this evening, by the way, and I shall improve the opportunity to give her a bit of fatherly advice."

Tommy did not seem at all paternal in manner or appearance, and I was a trifle disappointed that our Parisian experiences bade fair to be confined to the chaperonage of the girl, whose acquaintance we had made through the accident of travel. The studio which he had formerly occupied, a large atelier and three smaller rooms in a rambling old building on the Boulevard St. Germain, was vacant, and he had leased

it by letter from London, so that we were soon comfortably settled, and, although I asked no questions, and he volunteered no information, I appreciated that he was contemplating a long stay.

The text for the first of his paternal admonitions was furnished by the young man who was making his adieus when we called for Miss Roberts that evening. He was irreproachably dressed and polite enough, but while he was undoubtedly an American we should not have been eager to claim him as a compatriot. The indefinable something which stamps a man as a gentleman was absent, and Tommy's acknowledgment of the introduction was anything but cordial. I might have attributed his frigidity to another cause if I had not felt the same repulsion toward her acquaintance, whom she introduced as "Mr. Collier, of New York," and I was relieved when she announced that she had only just met him.

"Mr. Adams, the gentleman who took me to the train in London, wrote to him about me and asked him to see that I was comfortably settled here," she explained, as we drove to the restaurant where we were to dine. "I am sure that this scarlet cape is a mascot, because every one is so kind to me."

"Perhaps it is a bait," laughed Tommy. "Mr. Adams is, I suppose, an old friend?"

"Oh, dear, no!" she answered. "He introduced himself to me at the Cecil, but he was as kind and considerate as any one could be."

Mr. Tommy Williams was a tactful person, and I never realized that fact more thoroughly than while I listened to the veiled lecture which he read the young woman upon the danger of making casual masculine acquaintances, even among her own countrymen whom she met abroad. Miss Roberts listened to his admonitions quietly and received them in good part, but there was just a suspicion of mischief in the glance which she cast at him, when she asked if she was also to regard him as a possible wolf in sheep's clothing.

"By good rights, you should," he answered half-seriously. "I am fairly well known, however, and I am quite willing to produce references. To be perfectly frank, I doubt if either your friend Mr. Adams or his friend Mr. Collier would be willing or able to do that, and until you know more about them I should advise you to be careful."

"But, my dear Mr. Williams, I am not engaging a cook," she replied, laughing. "I assure you that I shall be careful, but if you scold me any more I shall feel that I am doing something very daring in coming out with you in this way and insist that you take me home at once." Tommy looked at her ruefully and shrugged his shoulders.

"There are several things which you must learn by experience, I imagine, but I have no right to scold, and I shall simply watch out that the education may not be too serious for you," he said, with assumed indifference.

The girl expressed her gratitude, but I was impressed by the fact that she was thoroughly self-confident and did not intend to sacrifice any part of her newly found independence. She certainly appreciated the dinner which Tommy ordered at Voisin's, and under its soothing influence she forgot any trace of irritation which she may have felt. She was an excellent companion, full of spirit, with a keen sense of humor, and, although she was not at all lacking in femininity, she met us on the footing of a boy. For three days we were almost constantly together, that being the period which she had announced she intended to devote to "seeing Paris" before she settled down to serious work; and under our escort the scarlet golf-cape brought a touch of color into many a dismal museum and gloomy church.

In spite of Tommy's warnings, the young woman was wilful, and insisted upon receiving the man Collier, but as she laughingly said that she should give up all play and devote her days to the singing after her holiday time was over, we attached but little importance to it. True to her promise, after a jolly little dinner on the third evening, she bade

us a solemn farewell when we took her home and announced that until the following Sunday she should be invisible to callers and absorbed in her French and singing-lessons. After leaving her, we elected to walk back to the studio and dismissed the cab, and as we turned from the house a man whom we both thought to be Collier hurried from the shelter of an adjoining doorway, as if he had been on watch. Tommy said nothing, but a quarter of an hour later when a cab nearly knocked us over at a street-crossing he grasped my arm and gave an exclamation of astonishment. In the cab were three men whose faces we could not see, and a heavily veiled woman, but over her shoulders was a scarlet golf-capel! She was protesting volubly, and Tommy started to follow the cab, but stopped and laughed as a few scraps of her conversation came back to us.

"I suppose that there are a dozen scarlet capes in Paris by this time, and in any case, there is no doubt about the nationality of the wearer of that one," he said, grinning. "A few of the colloquial expressions which she used are not picked up by an American girl in three days, and they were given with true Gallic *empressment* and a Parisian accent. Miss Roberts is probably tucked safely up in her little bed by this time, but I confess that it gave me a start for a moment."

"Tommy, you are getting dotty," I said irritably. "I am beginning to have faith in the theory that red is the color of madness, and I believe that cape has hypnotized you."

"Well, I shall be free from its influence for four days, at any rate," he answered, laughing. "This is Wednesday, and we are warned to keep away until Sunday, but if the woman in the cab had not been speaking French I should assure myself of the girl's safety before that time. Paris is a big city, my boy, and Eugene Sue didn't exhaust its mysteries."

"But I have heard you wax so enthusiastic over its wonderful police force that I supposed it was perfectly safe for even unprotected females

here," I answered, and he shook his head.

"The police system makes it difficult for a criminal to escape, but that never acts as a deterrent to crime," he said. "Of course, there is a certain satisfaction in seeing justice done, but when the personal equation enters into it, it is far more satisfactory to have no crime committed. The little girl is none too wise, and I don't like the earmarks of the gentry who have become so interested in her comfort. I should like to know why Collier was hanging about there to-night."

That was the first of the puzzles which Mr. Tommy Williams found as a result of his chance acquaintance with the girl in the scarlet golf-cape, and one not to be solved for many a day, and when we next saw that striking garment there was no inclination on my part to restrain him from entering into an investigation of the kind which he had ostensibly left New York to avoid.

II.

Early the next morning Tommy sent a note to Miss Roberts, giving her an address which she had asked for and incidentally asking a question which required an immediate answer, and I saw from his manner that he was not entirely at ease about her.

"I don't half like the idea of that man Collier hanging about," he said, when I insinuated that he was getting as fussy as a hen with one chick. "I tell you it is almost criminal the way American girls are allowed to come over here without proper protection, and not the least of the dangers to which they are exposed is acquaintance with their own countrymen who are exiles for their country's good. That chap is a plausible delegate, but he seems shifty, and there are a thousand ways in which he might compromise an unsuspecting girl."

Collier had not impressed me favorably in the brief acquaintance I had with him, but as I did not feel called upon to stand *in loco parentis* to the

young woman I was not particularly exercised by fears for her safety, and devoted my attention to the *Paris Herald* until I was aroused by Tommy's exclamation of dismay when his messenger returned.

"By Jove, here's a facer, old chap!" he exclaimed excitedly, after earnestly questioning the messenger. "Madame Bernar, who keeps the pension, says that Miss Roberts has not been home since she went out with us last evening."

"Which is obviously untrue, as we both saw her enter the house with our own eyes," I said indifferently, but Tommy shook his head.

"We saw her enter the front door, but there is a long staircase leading to the apartments," he answered, and his tone expressed a keen anxiety. "You may also remember that a short time later a woman in a scarlet golf-cape passed us in a cab, accompanied by three men who were evidently detaining her against her indignant protest."

"Which was voiced in idiomatic French, of which Miss Roberts has practically no knowledge," I objected, and he looked nonplused for a moment.

"But just the same, I shall find out what it means," he said savagely, as he took up his overcoat, and in spite of my skepticism I prepared to accompany him. Never before had Tommy allowed the cabman to follow the manner of his kind in the French capital and unmercifully beat his crowbar of a horse without protest, but on our drive to Madame Bernar's he encouraged it by offers of liberal *pourboires* which stimulated the driver to reckless corner-cutting and most unusual speed. When we arrived he fairly ran through the hall and up the long stairs, so that he was almost breathless when Madame Bernar received us, none too cordially, in the salon.

"But certainly I cannot be mistaken," she replied coldly, when Tommy assured her that we had seen the young woman enter the house the previous evening. "Mees Roberts has not returned to the apartment, and it is not the behavior proper that a young

woman in my house remains away the night. Monsieur will appreciate that it is not to be allowed, and when he again sees the young mees he will, perhaps, be so good as to ask where I shall do myself the pleasure of sending the effects which she has left here."

"If I ever see Miss Roberts again, I shall take very good care that she does not darken the doors of this house," retorted Tommy angrily, for the woman's manner left no doubt as to her meaning.

She shrugged her shoulders indifferently. "Monsieur will, in that case, spare me a duty very disagreeable," she answered icily. "With a clientele of the most respectable it would be deplorable to have a matter scandalous transpire in the Maison Bernar, and Mees Roberts is not of the kind——"

"Madame Bernar, I shall listen to no such insinuations against Miss Roberts," interrupted Tommy, who had quickly regained control of his temper. "It is your place to protect the reputations of your guests, at least, but I don't intend to teach you your business. I assure you that I saw Miss Roberts enter this house last night, and that I am absolutely ignorant as to her present whereabouts. I have every reason to be anxious about her, and I want you to give me such information as may enable me to trace her. You say that some of her effects are here, and I am especially anxious to know if the scarlet golf-cape which she wore is among them."

"*Mon Dieu*, always the scarlet golf-cape!" exclaimed the Frenchwoman irritably. "Your compatriot Monsieur Collier inquires for the American mees this morning, and when I give him the assurance personal that she does not return, he also inquires for the cape. It is not here, monsieur, and the remaining wardrobe of the mees is of the most meager."

"But her toilet articles—she has left them here?" asked Tommy, and Madame Bernar grinned sardonically.

"Will monsieur make the inspection personal of the room?" she asked, with a sneer, but he paid no attention to

her manner, and quickly availed himself of the invitation. I remained in the salon while he accompanied Madame Bernar to the girl's room, and when, after a short absence, they returned his expression was very serious, while the Frenchwoman looked at us both with unmistakable disapproval.

"If monsieur is still doubtful, he may report the matter to the police," she said maliciously. "As for me, it is not my affair. The pension of the mees is paid for this day, and to-morrow I permit that another takes the room."

"And if that other happens to be an unprotected American girl, she would do well to move away from a house where a misadventure is regarded as a crime," said Tommy stiffly, motioning to me to accompany him; and without the formality of adieus, we left the apartment.

"Miss Roberts did not return to her room last night," he said positively, when we reached the street. "The dress which she wore in the afternoon was still laid across the bed as she left it when she changed before we called for her; her toilet articles were on the dresser, and the bed had not been disturbed. That confounded old harridan is convinced that we are concerned in her absence, and with the suspicion which has been nourished by years of her present occupation, she is quick to attribute it to the worst motives. Of course, there may be a plausible explanation for her absence, but I am inclined to think that she was carried off against her will. I don't believe that Collier was skulking about there for any good purpose, and if I can get hold of him I'll wager that I can find out where she is in short order."

"You forget that he also inquired for her this morning," I suggested, and he gave an exclamation of impatience.

"I forget nothing; that was simply as a blind," he said savagely. "I can't take the chance of involving her in a scandal, or I should go to the police at once about her disappearance, but I shall cable to America for full information about her, and unless I find that she has friends here, with

whom she may be sheltered, I'll make trouble for some one until I find her."

"How much do you know about her family, Tommy?" I asked, for I could not remember that she had told us anything very definite.

"Why, I know she comes from Pittsburgh, which is her home, and—and——" He hesitated, and I smiled at the puzzled expression which came to his face. "Confound it, that's all I do know!" he admitted. "I felt that I had known her for a long time after we had been together for ten minutes, but now that I come to think of it she never told me anything very definite about herself."

"No, my recollection is that the young woman chattered a good deal without saying much," I commented dryly, and it was quite apparent that for a moment his faith was shaken, but his loyalty regained the mastery.

"I can't believe that there is anything wrong," he said defiantly. "There was no particular reason why she should have confided her family history to us, but it is a matter which can be quickly settled by cable, and I shall ask Longley to get full information about her. I'll send that message and then try to locate the man Collier."

The composition of the cable cost Mr. Tommy Williams no little bother, for when he tried to convey an idea of the young woman's identity he found that he had very few facts to go upon. He was puzzled in writing it, and destroyed a half-dozen blanks as unsatisfactory, and when he submitted the final result to me I realized that Longley would have no easy task. I was annoyed by the rudeness of a Frenchman who had watched his efforts with evident amusement, and now seemed determined to read the result over my shoulder, a design which I frustrated, while Tommy eyed the intruder with evident suspicion. The cable read:

Ascertain full particulars about family of Miss Virginia Roberts, age twenty, five feet seven, brown hair and eyes, resident of Pittsburgh. Left America about one month since to study singing in Paris. Find if she has friends in Paris; if so, names and addresses. Cable fully. Rush. Important.

I handed it back, and after Tommy had paid for it and given the address to which an answer should be sent, we left the office. I called his attention to the Frenchman who had been so curious, and he smiled as the man walked off in a different direction from the one we took.

"My dear boy, I spotted him the moment he entered the office," he said. "He was on the opposite side of the street, when we came out from the Pension Bernar, and he followed us. It is only another indication that there is some design in the disappearance of Miss Roberts, and I am convinced that the people who are responsible for it will keep track of our movements for the next few days. He was watching the house this morning, Collier was watching it last night, and my impression is that the latter is the man we want to get hold of. The most likely place to find him is in one of the American bars which are thicker than mushrooms after a rain, in this neighborhood. Fred's is the oldest and best of them, and as I know the proprietor of old we'll have a try there first." We turned out of the Place de l'Opéra, and ten minutes later we had learned all that the expatriated bartender who introduced the seductive cocktail to the Parisians knew about Collier.

"He's in here two or three times a day regularly," he said, in reply to Tommy's questions, after their old acquaintance had been renewed. "He was here this morning, in fact, and I noticed him particularly because he seemed to be upset about something. He's a high roller, all right; the best is none too good for him, and he's had rooms at the Pitt for the past three months. You might find him there now, but if you miss him I'll tell him that you're looking for him when he comes in again."

"You can cut that out, Fred, if you don't mind," answered Tommy. "I hardly know him, and I don't believe that he would be particularly anxious to see me, but I am a little curious about him." Fred looked at Tommy sharply and nodded. "Say, Mr. Williams, I

know that you don't travel in his class," he said, in a low voice. "Just in a friendly way, I wish that you'd put me next if there's anything crooked about his game over here. I'm not looking for trouble with the police, and there's been 'too many of 'em about here lately to suit me."

"Have you any reason to suppose that there is anything crooked about him?" asked Tommy eagerly.

Fred cast a quick glance at the corner table where an elderly Frenchman, the only customer in the bar, was leisurely sipping an absinth and reading the *Figaro*. "When I graduated from the Bowery to the Hoffman I found it wasn't always wise to recognize a man who ordered a forty-cent highball on Broadway as a customer who used to kick at giving up a nickel for a schooner of beer down below," he said, grinning. "For the same reasons, I don't always call my patrons here by the names they wore on the other side of the pond, and so long as a man doesn't try to turn a trick in this place, his money's good over the bar. There was another thing that I learned long before I left the Bowery, and that was to pipe off a 'plain-clothes man' on sight. They don't do much masquerading in little old New York, and when they do their police boots always give 'em away, but disguise is their long suit over here. They're jim dandies at it, too, but it isn't good enough to fool an old Bowery boy. That gazabo in the corner with the red ribbon in his buttonhole looks as if he had one foot in the grave, but he would show up for about twenty-five if you pulled the wig and specs off of him, and he understands English as well as you do."

We made an opportunity to glance in the direction of the supposed detective, and surely if it was a disguise it was a most convincing one, for he appeared a perfect specimen of the type of elderly dandies who spend their days in the boulevard cafés, sipping interminable absinths and observing the passing tide of humanity.

"Did you know Collier in America?" asked Tommy.

Fred shook his head. "No, I never knew any one by the name of *Collier*," he answered, with a little emphasis on the name. "It's many a long day since I mixed a drink behind the bar at the Hoffman, but I passed many a one over to a man who looked like him, only they called him Jack Whitehead then."

We both gave a little start of astonishment, for under that name Longley had often spoken of a man who always escaped arrest, although the police were morally certain that he had planned and directed several of the most notorious of the great bank and jewel robberies of recent years.

"Mind you, I'm not making any accusations, but I'm sure uneasy," continued Fred. "All sorts of people come to a public bar, but you know that I run a square place and get the cream of the business. I don't want to be queered by a scandal, but I do want to protect my patrons. If you've been touched by him, I'm not saying a word if you have him pinched, but I wish they'd stop shadowing him here. Fake cabbies, match-sellers, dudes, and the whole bunch of sleuths follow him every time he comes here for a drink, and I don't want to be mixed up in any trouble."

"You won't get into any through me, but I should prefer that you said nothing to him about my inquiries," answered Tommy. "I'll look him up, but I want to do it in my own way." There was a look of triumph on his face when we left the bar, and I realized that he was in for an investigation in earnest.

"If Fred is correct in his identification, perhaps you will admit that there are dangers for a young girl alone in Paris which she might not suspect," he said. "Longley considers Whitehead to be one of the cleverest of the unconvicted criminals, and a little matter of kidnaping or abduction wouldn't bother his conscience if there was anything to be made by it."

"Show me a motive, or that he could make anything by carrying off Miss Roberts, and perhaps you will convince me," I answered doubtfully. "If Fred is correct it is evident Collier is being

shadowed by the police for something else, and if you will take my advice you will go straight to them, report her disappearance and your suspicions of Collier, and then wash your hands of the whole business."

"And incidentally involve the girl in a scandal, and beyond question get us both locked up in cells at the prefecture, for my pains," he said mockingly. "You seem to forget that the police here have arbitrary power to lock a man up on suspicion of crime and that French justice regards a suspected man as guilty until he proves his innocence."

"Which we should not have the slightest difficulty in doing immediately," I said, and Tommy's grin was very Mephistophelean.

"My boy, you might cool your heels in a cell for a fortnight before any one knew where you were," he answered. "Under the Code Napoléon there is no bail, and the habeas corpus proceeding is not recognized, so even your ambassador would be powerless to help you. It is a power which the police rarely abuse, for the French detectives are adepts in disguise and shadowing, and they prefer to keep a man under observation, while he is at liberty to supply them with evidence, rather than to lock him up, scaring away his accomplices, and putting him on his guard. When they finally make the arrest they can hold a prisoner indefinitely, subject him to constant examinations, and build up a case at their leisure, while the public knows nothing about it until the public trial. I'm convinced that Collier is concerned in the disappearance of Miss Roberts, and her beauty and attractiveness would furnish sufficient motive." I shot a glance at him from the corner of my eye, for his tone had grown very tender when he mentioned her name.

"I confess that I am pretty badly cut up about it," he continued soberly. "Remember that I spent two years in this delightful but mysterious capital, and my rambles in its out-of-the-way corners taught me that the police don't know everything that goes on within the old lines of fortifications. So far as

doing anything active goes, my hands are tied until I hear from Longley, and, although I grudge every moment that passes before I get my hands on Collier, I see nothing for it but to return to the studio and await his cable."

He was very quiet as we walked over the bridge of the Alma, and I noticed that he gave a little shudder as he looked over the parapet at the dark waters of the Seine, which had hidden so many mysteries, as if he felt intuitively that it would play a part in this one, but as we approached the studio his face brightened. Standing in front of the entrance was a fiacre, both horse and driver apparently lost in the deep slumber which characterizes the motive power and pilot of the cab engaged by the hour. Tommy ran up the three long flights of stairs, and I knew that he expected to find that Miss Roberts had taken refuge in our apartment, but when he opened the studio door he paused and uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

Striding impatiently up and down the large atelier, tugging viciously at his heavy black mustache and puffing savagely at a long, black cigar, was Collier, the man above all others in the great city of Paris whom we most wished to see!

III.

Collier was apparently in no pleasant frame of mind, and he answered Tommy's conventional greeting with a growl which was anything but courteous.

"I haven't come here for your pleasure nor for mine, but to find out what the devil you are up to," he said, in reply to Tommy's question as to what he owed the pleasure of his visit. "I understand that you've been berating me to Miss Roberts, and first I want to find out why, and then what you have done with that young woman who was placed under my protection."

Tommy looked at him curiously for a moment, and I half-expected an outburst, or physical violence, but his tone

was decidedly conciliatory and soothing when he answered:

"Just one moment, Mr. Collier. I am afraid that your impatience has grown while you waited for us, and you had better sit down and cool off a bit. If you can convince me that you have any right to question me in regard to Miss Roberts, I shall be only too glad to answer your questions, but until you do I shall not admit your right to mix yourself up in my affairs."

Collier looked at him in astonishment, and, from the quick change in his manner, I suspected that his bluster had been assumed to aggravate Tommy and to provoke some admission in the heat of anger.

"I don't know that I am obliged to explain to you," he said more quietly, as he took a chair. "I don't mind telling you, however, that she was committed to my care by a mutual friend, and when I find that she has been unwise enough to remain away from home all night, I intend to know the reason why."

"I am quite as much interested in knowing the reason as you can be, but I can assure you that you know as well as I do that we escorted Miss Roberts to her pension last evening, and left her there," answered Tommy.

Collier shook his head. "Oh, yes, you do, Mr. Collier," Tommy said. "I saw you watching the house when we left her at the front door, and I doubt if the recommendation of your friend Mr. Adams gave you authority to spy upon her movements. I am free to confess that I warned the young lady against chance acquaintances, and offered to prove my own respectability by unquestionable references. As we very openly escorted her home and left her in safety, while your evident desire to escape observation as you watched the house, was, to say the least, suspicious, I think it is up to you to give explanations, rather than to demand them."

Collier's face was a study as Tommy so unexpectedly assumed the defensive, and all bluster dropped from his manner. "You are right in one thing, Mr. Williams," he admitted frankly. "I

was watching the house when you returned, but it was only through anxiety for Miss Robert's reputation. I don't suppose that you are aware of it, but the very conspicuous cape which she always wore has made her easily recognized, and I have heard more than a dozen people speak of seeing her at the restaurants and cafés. So long as you escorted her only to the reputable ones it made little difference, but I know that curiosity leads people to do queer things in Paris, and I wished to assure myself that she was not becoming unpleasantly conspicuous."

"Your insinuation is so plain that you may as well put it in words," answered Tommy stiffly. "I am rather glad that you have made it, for it leaves me equally free to speak my mind. As I have told you, I was quite willing to identify myself as a reputable citizen to Miss Roberts, and, if the necessity arises, I am quite willing to make the same offer to you. Until there is a necessity for it, however, we shall assume that the real welfare and safety of Miss Roberts is a matter of quite as much moment to me as to you, and that I should be less apt to cause harm to her reputation than you would."

"It seems to me that you are the one who is making insinuations," retorted Collier, coloring. "I am not four-flushing around with references, like a coachman out of a job, but if any one says anything against the character of Adam Collier I stand ready to administer punishment without the aid of the law."

"Which might give you a certain amount of personal satisfaction—provided you were able to do it—but would hardly be considered a convincing vindication," answered Tommy sarcastically. "I have no desire to put you to the test, for I know nothing derogatory to *Mr. Adam Collier*, except that I think it is hardly dignified to play the spy on a young woman. You know that it is often difficult to prove anything against a man, no matter how strong your suspicions may be. For instance, there is a man in New York whom the police suspect of being a

very clever criminal; but, in police parlance, they have never been able to get him 'to rights.' Perhaps you have heard of him? He is commonly known as Jack Whitehead, I believe."

Collier's face was as imperturbable as a mask, and the name which Tommy hurled at him so suddenly caused no change in his expression. "No, I don't remember to have heard the name before," he answered indifferently. "I see no good purpose to be served by slanging each other, and each insinuating that the other is a horse-thief or a thug. To be perfectly frank, I believe that you know what has become of Miss Roberts, and, while I admit that I saw you escort her home last night, I do not admit that she did not slip out and join you later. If you deny that, I shall have to accept your word—unless I can prove that she did—and I warn you that the scarlet golf-cape has made her so conspicuous during her short stay in Paris that you will find it difficult to conceal her whereabouts."

"Which is a fact I count upon to aid me in finding her," answered Tommy, ignoring the implied insult. "To be equally frank, I am of the opinion that you are mixed up in her disappearance, and I may tell you that the cab in which she drove toward the Seine last night, after we left her at the Pension Bernar, nearly ran over us."

If Collier's astonishment was assumed when Tommy made this statement it was cleverly done, and he looked at him eagerly.

"Then you did see her!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "I knew that you could give me the information I wanted, and you may as well give it up now."

"Yes, I will give up all I know," answered Tommy, looking at him intently. "A woman in a scarlet golf-cape, accompanied, I thought, by three men, of whom I strongly suspect you to have been one, was driven so rapidly toward the river last night that it nearly ran us down soon after we left the pension. I am not positive that there were three men in the cab. I have an idea that one of the other occupants was a

woman, for we heard violent protest in a feminine voice, but it was made in French, of which Miss Roberts is ignorant. That is a fact which you might report to the police, if you feel that you are entitled to look after Miss Roberts' welfare; but I warn you that if you mix her name in any scandal, I shall make it a point to deal with you personally."

There was no suspicion of the assumption of anger in Collier's manner as Tommy finished, but his expression was more that of an enraged beast at bay than of a man swayed by righteous indignation. He fairly foamed at the mouth as he shook his fist in Tommy's face, and he uttered a volley of abuse, but before we could restrain him he seized his hat and rushed from the studio. Tommy looked after him ruefully for a moment, and then, opening a trunk quickly, slipped a revolver into his pocket and started after him.

"Wait here for the cable, and when it comes take it to Fred's, and wait there for me," he called back. "I don't want to lose track of that delegate, if I can help it."

Long experience with Mr. Tommy Williams had taught me that he expected implicit obedience from any one whom he honored with his confidence, and, although I resigned myself to the inaction of waiting, I rushed to the window of my bedroom, which overlooked the boulevard, to watch the beginning of the chase. Collier had jumped into his waiting cab, which was whirling around the corner as I reached the window, and Tommy started an apparently hopeless pursuit on foot, for want of better means of locomotion, and I saw him cast an envious glance at an automobile, whose driver had been adjusting his engine across the street, and who twisted the starting-crank just as Tommy came out of the house.

I quite shared his belief that Miss Roberts' absence was not a voluntary one, but prior to Collier's inexplicable behavior I had not been seriously alarmed by it. Perhaps my recent experience with the fair sex had made me doubtful of her apparent innocence and lack of knowledge of the world, and

Miss Roberts had seemed so eminently able to care for herself that my chivalry had been little stimulated. Something in Tommy's expression as we crossed the bridge, and his significant reference to the Seine when speaking of her to Collier, convinced me that he feared the worst, and I knew that he was not easily alarmed, so that in my solitude I endeavored to form some theory which would account for her forcible abduction. I felt certain that Collier was, in fact, Jack Whitehead, for Fred had been raised in a school which sharpens one's wits, and I knew that he would not make such an identification unless he was positive. With the memory of the face of Adams, of which I had a good view at Victoria, in my mind, I concluded that the two men were confederates in some scheme against the welfare of society, but I could find no plausible explanation for the attack on the girl. I had reasoned myself into taking a very tender view of that young woman's conduct, for she had truly been everything which was agreeable and feminine during our brief but intimate acquaintance, when the arrival of Longley's cablegram aroused all of my old suspicions. It was as follows:

Don't buttinski against the other guy's game. Take a tip from wise guy and make it twenty-three for you; beat it and skiddoo. Buzz-saw too dangerous to monkey with.

The message meant but one thing to me, for I knew that Longley would be neither so frivolous nor so extravagant as to cable Bowery slang and American colloquialisms without intending to convey a serious warning. Obviously, from the promptness of the reply, they must have known something about the girl at police headquarters or in the district attorney's office, and the warning was sent to keep Tommy from possible entanglement. I was fortunate enough to find an empty cab passing the door, and drove rapidly to Fred's with the message, for I feared that in his ignorance he might seriously compromise himself. As I drove up in front of the place, Tommy came from the opposite direction, and I was surprised to see

that he was in the cab which had waited for Collier in front of the studio.

"Where's your man?" I asked, and he grinned at me after he had paid his cabman and given him such a *pour-boire* that it called forth profuse thanks.

"He's where I didn't care to follow him, and where he'll be safe enough, I reckon," he said. "He was unwise enough to lose his angelic temper when this cabby kicked about his fare, and shook his finger in his face to emphasize his remarks. Collier punched him, with the usual result, and he's locked up and hollering for the ambassador to come and get him out. I know from a previous personal experience that it will take him about a week to square that little matter, and it will help to keep his mind from worrying about what I am doing. Now let's have the cable." I watched him a trifle maliciously as he read it, and, although Tommy rarely swore, I was quite prepared for his exclamation when he had finished.

"Well, I'm damned if this don't beat me!" he said irritably. "After all the trouble I have taken to help Longley, it is discouraging to get such a piffling reply when I ask him for the first time to do me a service!"

"Perhaps he is trying to do you the very greatest one," I suggested, for I saw that he was deeply hurt. "Remember that you told me that you had disproved the old saw that 'There is no fool like an old fool,' and Longley was cognizant of the fact that it was at a considerable cost to my peace of mind. Is it not possible that he is trying to prevent a similar unhappiness coming to you?" I regretted the insinuation almost before it was made, for Tommy's face grew very white, and he crumpled the paper in his hand savagely.

"The closest friendship hardly permits a remark of that kind," he answered passionately. "Surely you should be manly enough to spare the name of a girl, even if friendship to me did not make you hesitate to be unkind. Of course, I appreciate that you believe

that Longley is trying to warn me against her, but I prefer to trust my own intuitions. I know that Miss Roberts has been more or less involved with men whom neither of us approve of, but you must make allowances for her ignorance and trustfulness. I almost hesitated to destroy any of her faith in human nature, for to me it is one of the most charming traits which she possesses. If you doubt her, there is no use in my counting upon your assistance to unravel the mystery of her disappearance, and I assure you that your skepticism is a bitter disappointment to me."

"I believe that you can count upon me, Tommy," I said quickly. "If you care for her, it is enough for me, and I shall make myself believe in her, in spite of any appearances of evil which, after all, we are all too prone to suspect."

IV.

Tommy was evidently at a loss for a starting-point for his investigation of Miss Roberts' mysterious disappearance, when one of those fortuitous chances, which most men call luck, but which he always cited as an evidence of the value of accurate observation, suggested a plan of campaign. Standing at one end of the long bar in Fred's place, a coign of vantage from which he could observe every one who entered, was a young Frenchman, and, although he quickly turned his back when we came in, we both recognized him as the man who had endeavored to intrude his attentions upon Miss Roberts in the customs room at Calais. A little smile of satisfaction came to Tommy's lips, and when we reached the street after a very short stay, during which the masher kept his face turned from us, his manner was triumphant.

"Perhaps you will now believe that there is a strong presumption of conspiracy in the disappearance of the little girl?" he said interrogatively, but I shook my head.

"The fact that a Frenchman who tried to make her acquaintance at Calais

happens to drop into such a well-known place as Fred's American Bar is scarcely convincing proof," I objected.

Tommy gave a little snort of disgust. "My dear fellow, will you never be convinced that coincidences are always significant when they demonstrate a connection between a suspected person and a crime?" he said impatiently. "Miss Roberts makes the casual acquaintance of this man Adams in London, and he straightway puts himself to the trouble of looking after her departure for Paris. For some reason he does not accompany her, but he takes precious good care that he shall not lose track of her on the journey, and this chap is on the lookout when she arrives at Calais. Then, when she reaches Paris, Collier takes charge, and we have reason to know that she was under his close observation. The Frenchman was apparently waiting for some one, and if that some one happens to be Collier, which I strongly suspect, it is a safe indication that they are, at least, acquaintances. If you grant that, in view of the girl's disappearance and the way they previously thrust their attentions upon her, it is fair to assume that the coincidence points to a carefully planned conspiracy."

"Tommy, to my mind you are making a mountain out of a mole-hill, for you have discovered absolutely no motive, and, granting that these three men are crooks and working in collusion, there is no combination of criminals which commits purposeless crime," I answered. "Miss Roberts can't be wealthy, for she very frankly told us that it was necessary for her to make a living by her voice, and none of them seems of the type which commits wanton violence."

"I should have the motive, if Longley hadn't thrown me down," he said bitterly. "So far as that goes, I confess that I am utterly at a loss, but I am convinced that such a combination exists. It's dollars to doughnuts that this Frenchman has an appointment with Collier which the latter can't keep because he is locked up, and now I am sorry that he was arrested, for——"

"You can spare your regrets, then!" I exclaimed, interrupting him, for striding along on the opposite side of the boulevard, roughly jostling aside every one who impeded his progress, and his expression indicating very bad temper, was Collier. Tommy grasped me by the arm and drew me into the shelter of a doorway, from which we could watch him without being seen.

"He seems to be in a hurry, but I reckon he's had enough of cabmen for a bit," he said, with a grin of amusement at the recollection of the altercation and the subsequent arrest. "The one thing that puzzles me is how the deuce he managed to get out so soon, for it usually takes twenty-four hours to get the red tape untangled unless one has a strong pull. Hello!—what's wrong with him now?"

Collier had suddenly darted toward a newspaper-vendor who was racing along the sidewalk, calling the latest sensation in the raucous voice which distinguishes his tribe in Paris, and had torn a paper from his hand. Disregarding the insistent demands for payment, he eagerly glanced over the first page, and even across the wide boulevard we could detect a most surprising change in his manner and expression. His florid face blanched, the paper fluttered from his fingers as if they had suddenly become paralyzed, and, staggering back, he leaned against a building for support. The paper-seller recovered his wares and sped down the boulevard, and Collier, regaining a certain amount of self-control, hailed a passing fiacre, and, climbing into it, was driven rapidly away.

"By Jove, there must have been a facer for him in that paper!" exclaimed Tommy excitedly. "There's the explanation of his prompt release—the man is no more at liberty than if he were in a dungeon!"

He pointed to a young fellow dressed in knickerbockers, Norfolk jacket, and tweed cap—a perfect type of the touring Englishman—who had been idling along the pavement, looking in the shop-windows and wheeling a bicycle beside him. When Collier drove off he

jumped on his wheel and pedaled rapidly after the fiacre, and Tommy nudged me as the uniformed gendarme on point duty at the cross-street raised his white baton and stopped the traffic to let him through.

A moment later Mr. Tommy Willianis was as much perturbed by the item in the afternoon paper as Collier had been, for the cries of "*Le Mystère de la Pèlerine Rouge*," shouted by a paper-seller, arrested our attention; and under double-ledged head-lines we read the account of the finding of the body of a young woman in the Seine, the hands tied behind the back, *the head and shoulders tightly enveloped in a scarlet golf-capel* Tommy's face became ghastly as he read the details, for the descriptions of the body left no doubt as to the identity suggested by the red golf-cape, but his voice was firm and passionless as he mechanically repeated it.

"Heavy brown hair; brown eyes; height, one hundred and seventy centimètres—approximately five feet seven inches—weight, seventy kilos, or about one hundred and forty pounds; hands and feet small and well shaped. Clothing of fine quality, and thought to be of foreign manufacture; dress of blue foulard, with white figured pattern; shoes, size five, and bearing stamp of American maker; one *mousquetaire* glove of gray suède, size five and a half." He drew a glove from his pocket and eagerly examined the size mark.

"I carried this off last night by mistake," he said, as he pointed to a "5½" stamped in black on the inside of the wrist, and, as he handled the dainty bit of suède, a faint scent of the girl's favorite perfume seemed to make him realize for the first time the full significance of the news item, and he gave an exclamation of horror.

"A fine, manly pair of protectors we have proved ourselves," he said remorsefully. "Instead of driving off the rascals who swarmed about her, we contented ourselves with vague warnings, which she, poor girl, could not appreciate, and let them murder her in

cold blood!" In five minutes he seemed to have aged ten years, and, while the account of the tragedy had shocked and horrified me, I knew that his affection for the girl had grown so quickly that a stronger element than mere friendship made his grief a deep one, and I strove to comfort him.

"Tommy, it may all be a horrible mistake," I said. "There must be other red golf-capes in Paris, and that description is a very general one. The murder of the girl would be such a purposeless crime that I can't believe——"

"Oh, yes, you can, and you do believe that there is no mistake," he interrupted sternly. "I am not ungrateful for your kindly effort at dissimulation, for I know what prompts it; but the time has come when we must look things squarely in the face. I have been negligent in protecting her from danger, but I shall not rest until the brutes who murdered her have been tracked down."

His power of self-control was wonderfully developed, and, after his rather melodramatic announcement, he calmed down, and there was nothing in his manner or expression to indicate the intense personal interest which he felt in the affair; but I knew him too well to be deceived. Remembering his great consideration for me under similar circumstances, I should have been glad to have been able to comfort him, but all that I could find words to utter was a hearty offer of cooperation, and I volunteered to visit the morgue and make sure of the identification.

"No, unpleasant as it will be, that is something which I must do myself, but it is too late to go there to-day," he answered, in a matter-of-fact tone; but, in spite of his self-possession, he could not prevent a little shudder of apprehension. "We shall assume that it is Miss Roberts who has been murdered until we are convinced by her appearance in the flesh that another woman presenting the same physical characteristics and dressed in identical and rather uncommon garments was thrown into the Seine. So far as we know, her only acquaintances in Paris were you,

myself, and Collier; and we, of course, exclude ourselves from any guilty knowledge of the crime. That leaves Collier, who we have every reason to believe is, in fact, Jack Whitehead, and who is alleged to furnish the brains for a very clever band of criminals. We know that he has manifested a most unusual interest in the girl; hardly warranted by the manner of the introduction and his slight acquaintance. You may remember that several of the crimes committed by the gang which Longley asserts Whitehead controls were accompanied by violence, and at least two of them by murder."

"But Whitehead was not actively engaged in them; you recollect that Longley admitted that his alibi was perfect, and he is not of the ruffian type," I objected. "We saw how the news of this murder affected him, and, unless the man is a consummate actor, and was aware that he was being watched, I believe that the news of it was as much of a shock to him as it was to us."

"I grant that, but I'll wager that in the other crimes he did not refuse his share of the loot, just because his agents found it necessary to kill some one to obtain it. I dare say he gave every evidence of annoyance when it was reported to him that it was necessary to kill the night watchman at the McKinley Bank," said Tommy sarcastically. "The stake in that robbery was a large one, and the details had been so carefully planned that it seems hardly possible that they should have overlooked the necessity of silencing him. Possibly the killing of the special officer, when the great gold shipment disappeared between the sub-treasury and the Cunard pier, was purely accidental, but a man in charge of a million of bullion might be expected to put up a fight for it, and my recollection is that he was bludgeoned in cold blood, while the driver only escaped by feigning death after he was shot at. Remember that his gang is always after big money, and a life or two is of small importance to them. Hold on!" he said sharply, as I started to interrupt. "I

know that you will raise the same old objection—an entire lack of motive—but suppose you argue the other way. What would be the motive of Collier, alias Whitehead, in making the acquaintance of the girl and spying upon her? Is it not quite possible that her abduction might be of the greatest use to him; that the price of her restoration to liberty might be immunity from arrest or persecution, for, although the girl was not wealthy, isn't it believable that she had relatives, or a lover, who had power to harm Collier or some of his confederates, and that she would be held as a hostage?"

There was a ring of triumph in his voice as he propounded his theory, which would have seemed fantastic and far-fetched from any one else. I had received such convincing proofs of his power of inductive reasoning in other cases, however, that I should have received it without question, save for one palpably weak point.

"Her murder would not serve such a purpose," I said doubtfully. "It would simply stimulate prosecution, if it could be brought home to them."

"The actual murder I believe to have been unpremeditated; one of the unavoidable accidents connected with criminal pursuits," he replied bitterly. "We saw enough of her to know that she was plucky and resourceful, and I do not believe that she would submit tamely to abduction. The newspaper account states that her hands were tied; a sure indication that she fought for her liberty, and that force was employed to subdue her. Now, the natural instinct of a woman is to scream when she is alarmed, and it is probable that the choking which her captors resorted to to silence her was carried too far, and she was unintentionally killed. The disposal of the body by throwing it in the river points to the professional criminal, for it is an invariable rule the world over that where a river plays any great part in the life of a city, the professional criminal utilizes it to rid himself of material evidence against him. Of course, this is all theory, but while our facts point in one direction

they are most meager, and we must fill in the gaps with supposition, which we can prove to be false or correct as we go along. I agree with you that Collier's first knowledge of the poor girl's death came but a moment ago, but I still believe that he was concerned in her abduction, and I think that we may find confirmation of that theory by following him to Fred's, where I believe he has gone to keep an appointment with our acquaintance of Calais."

My estimate of Tommy's reasoning powers was destined to be highly raised, for, when we again entered the American Bar, we found Collier, the Frenchman, and a third man, whose face puzzled me for a moment, but whom I soon recognized as the American who had traveled in the compartment with me from London to Dover, in close consultation at a table on which the evening papers were spread. At another table was the same elderly Frenchman whom Fred had pointed out as a disguised detective, to all appearances deeply absorbed in the paper which half-concealed his face. He glanced up in mild astonishment as Collier rose to his feet and advanced threateningly toward us, a copy of the evening paper in his hand.

"Say, have you got the nerve to come over and tell my friends the fairy-story about the woman with the red golf-cape that you saw in the cab last night?" he said angrily, and Tommy nodded.

"I am quite ready to repeat it to any one who has a right to hear it, but I hardly think a public bar is the proper place to discuss such a matter," he answered quietly, and Collier gave an exclamation of impatience.

"I reckon it will be discussed in worse places than this inside of twenty-four hours," he said sneeringly. "I listened to your bluff this morning, and I can tell you that if I had seen what you claimed to have seen last night I should have had the woman out of that cab instead of telling about it when it is too late to do any good."

"You see that I am rather chary about interfering with cabmen; it leads

to such unpleasant results," retorted Tommy; and I realized that he was wilfully angering the man whom he suspected for some purpose of his own. "If it would interest your pals, I have no objection to telling about what I saw, but I think that it would be infinitely more enlightening if they should tell what *they know*."

His remark and the use of the word "pals" amounted practically to a direct accusation, and Collier was furious, while his companions looked uneasily from one to the other. I moved a step nearer, for I fully expected that Collier would strike Tommy, and my late traveling companion, evidently under like apprehension, rose and caught him by the arm.

"Don't make a blame fool of yourself, old man," he said soothingly. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Williams; Collier is terribly cut up about the murder of a girl, who I take it is the young lady who traveled under your escort from London, and he isn't quite himself."

"You have heard enough from him, then, to know why we mutually distrust each other," answered Tommy, looking at him sharply. "I suppose that you have a right to intrude in this matter, and I trust that it is a better right than your friend has put forward."

"No; it isn't a question of right, at all—keep quiet, Collier!—it is merely one of common humanity," the man answered. "It's a serious thing when one of our countrywomen disappears so mysteriously in Paris, and from the newspaper account I take it that, while the fate of the girl is unfortunately pretty certain, the object of the murder and the identity of the murderers are unknown. From a very improbable story which Collier told me, you seem to have been a witness of a circumstance which had to do with her abduction."

Collier attempted to speak, but again the younger man, who seemed to have taken the affair out of his hands, silenced him.

Tommy looked at him sharply. "I don't know what Mr. Collier has told

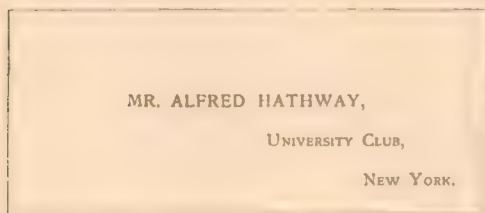
you, but I believe that I was a witness of one step in the abduction," he answered. "It is a thing which I refuse to discuss in a bar, but if you are honestly interested, and care to come to my studio this evening, I shall be glad to go over the whole thing with you."

"We'll come safe enough," growled Collier, but Tommy shook his head in emphatic negation.

"I don't remember that I included you in the invitation," he said insolently. "Your friend, whose name I haven't the pleasure of knowing, is the one I invited."

Collier was furious, and again I expected that he would strike Tommy, but the American controlled him, and induced him to go back to his seat at the table.

"I'll be there at nine sharp," he said, as he took a card from his case and handed it to Tommy. It was engraved, and read:



After Tommy had scribbled his Paris address on his own card we left the bar. Standing under a gas-lamp across the street, consulting a red-bound guide-book, was the English bicyclist who had followed Collier's cab, his wheel resting on the curb, and Tommy called my attention to him as we drove away.

"Either Collier is under observation for something else, or the police share my suspicions in this murder case," he said thoughtfully. "I wish that I had the confidence of Le Garde, the chief of the secret police, for they claim that he is a wonder, and that the force under him is the most efficient in the world."

"I think the wisest thing you can do is to make his acquaintance at once and report the whole thing to him," I suggested, for the uncanniness of the thing was getting on my nerves. "I don't see

why you ask this man Hathway to the studio and go out of your way to irritate Collier."

"Not without reason, surely, as you might do me the justice to acknowledge," replied Tommy confidently. "He supplied a missing link to my chain, for you will remember that he traveled on the same train with us from London, and I believe that it was his part to keep an eye on the girl between London and Paris. Collier is very much upset; I believe that his orders have been bungled, and he seems desperate. The more I can worry him the better I am satisfied, for he can do no further harm, and it may lead him to do something rash which will betray him. Hathway is a new man in the case; we have had no unpleasant encounter, and I think that I can obtain information from him by methods of my own."

Tommy's face was very Mephistophelean when I looked at him, and I knew that he was counting upon hypnotism to aid him in obtaining that information, but I felt ill at ease, and wished that we had never left New York to escape from criminal investigations, only to become more deeply involved in Paris. He was not to be dissuaded, however, and when I repeated the suggestion which he had ignored, he answered impatiently.

"Confound it, I've given you enough reasons for not going to the police!" he said. "The death of the girl removes any scruples about causing a scandal, but I can't afford to run the risk of losing my liberty just as I am getting the threads in my hands. Le Garde would probably be jealous of interference, and he is celebrated for bringing off dramatic coups. This affair will cause a tremendous sensation, and there is a chance for him to make an international reputation. It would be interesting to work with him, but, as Longley's flippant reply to my cable precludes asking for his indorsement of my good intentions, I shall have to go it alone, and I shall see if the stimulus of revenge will not enable me to succeed if Le Garde should fail."

A cablegram awaited him at the

studio, and its contents brought a puzzled expression to his face as he read aloud:

No discourtesy but sincere warning intended. Hope not offended. Impossible to wire details. Old friend on way will give full particulars. Pending arrival strongly repeat advice former communication.

A. J. L.

"Just another little complication in this Chinese puzzle," Tommy exclaimed impatiently. "Confound him!—if he wants to economize, why don't he try it on Bowery slang, and give me full information now? Old friend of whom?—of yours, mine, or the poor girl who has been murdered?"

He had given me a riddle I could not guess, but had I been able to answer the last question, it would have saved us a very bad quarter of an hour before we found the solution of "*Le Mystère de la Pèlerine Rouge*."

V.

Mr. Alfred Hathway proved to be a man of entirely different type from Collier, and his first words on entering the studio were an apology for what he termed the impetuosity of that gentleman.

"Since you appear to have considerable influence over him, I presume that you are old friends," said Tommy, who was carefully sizing up his visitor.

Hathway shrugged his shoulders. "If a man who is always a bird of passage can be said to make enduring friendships, perhaps we are," he answered indifferently. "As a matter of fact, I met him on the steamer coming over about three months ago, and we knocked about London a bit together. I don't imagine that friendship with him would be much of a recommendation to you, but, while he is a queer-tempered chap, he's good-hearted underneath, and he is terribly cut up about the disappearance of the girl in whom he had become very much interested. I am very sorry to find that you two have had a falling out about her."

"We were hardly intimate enough to have a falling out," answered Tommy

dryly. "Mr. Hathway, you know enough of the world to appreciate that a young woman has to be a trifle careful about making casual acquaintances. Frankly, I didn't like the cut of your friend's jib, and, as I considered his introduction a little irregular, I warned Miss Roberts to be careful. That, I believe, was the extent of my offense toward him, but he apparently felt justified in bringing very absurd charges against me."

Hathway looked at Tommy quizzically, a little twinkle of amusement in his eyes. "Mr. Williams, if there were not an element of tragedy in this business, I would suggest that it is a case of the pot making insinuations about the brunette complexion of the kettle," he said. "If it comes down to a question of unconventionality in making acquaintances, I might delicately hint that your method was not strictly according to social usages, but, if we are to do business together, we may as well drop that rot and get down to it. Now, I am a great believer in compromise—when there is anything in it—and I suggest that we eliminate Collier and try to get together, so that we can both work along the same lines, instead of at cross-purposes."

Under the tone of banter which he had adopted there was a ring of sincerity and anxiety, and Tommy hesitated for a moment before answering.

"If you can show me anything to be gained by it, I might consider your proposal," he said.

Hathway nodded. "Precisely—we are all selfish at heart," he assented. "Perhaps there is nothing to be gained, for I fear the last development puts anything of the kind out of the question; for it is bound to create a big sensation and make the game doubly dangerous, but it might avoid a lot of unpleasant complications if I could be induced not to squeal. It was a mistake to bring a woman into the case in the first place, but Collier was pig-headed about it, and now that he is reaping the reward of his obstinacy, I intend to get the price of keeping my mouth shut."

"And you would suggest?" prompted Tommy when he paused, carefully lighting a cigarette.

"That we play with our cards on the table," continued Hathway, after blowing a cloud in the air. "Just as a guaranty of good faith, suppose you play the first one, and tell me what has become of the girl."

"If the reports of the evening papers are to be relied upon, that is a question which I should think sufficiently answered," said Tommy quietly. Watching him carefully, I saw a new light come to his eyes, and knew that the surprising question had put him doubly on his guard.

"I never believe more than half of what I read in the American papers, and a somewhat smaller percentage in Paris," said Hathway, grinning. "Come on, it won't wash, even with the pipe-story you told Collier about the mysterious cab as a prologue. Very clever, I admit, but not quite convincing enough; and a visit to the morgue upset your little apple-cart."

"And you conclude that——"

"A very clever plant, with Mr. Thomas Williams superintending the details, was arranged for our friend Collier," interrupted Hathway, grinning again.

"Or shall we say for Jack Whitehead?" said Tommy quickly; and Hathway nodded.

"It isn't always wise to mention names, but I was never noted for caution," he answered. "Now, see here, Williams; he has made a mess of the whole thing. You can send him to night-school when it comes down to business, and if you'll let me in on the ground floor, I'll keep quiet about what I know, and we'll cut him and the rest of the bunch out."

I was entirely in the dark as to what Hathway was driving at, but Tommy did not appear to be in the least surprised, and received the rather startling proposition as coolly as if it had been a remark about the weather.

"And your idea of the ground floor would be about what?" he asked.

Hathway ticked off "One, two, three,

four," on his fingers. "It would have been sixths before, but I take it there are only four of us now. Let us say a quarter each, and then each one look out for himself."

Tommy was very thoughtful for a moment, and shook his head.

"We should have to consult about that before I could give an answer," he said slowly; and Hathway, for the first time, manifested impatience.

"Confound it, this is no time to waste a minute in consultation!" he answered irritably. "I'm not kicking about the way you played the game, but you have made it too risky for any of us to remain around here, and my head won't feel firm on my shoulders until I am over the frontier. Make it the original sixth, then, and if you will pay my part in cash now, I'll clear out to-night."

"Hathway, it's always wiser to sleep over a proposition," answered Tommy quietly, and he rose from his chair and stood in front of him. "You can't hurry me, and I should suggest that you go to sleep right here until I make up my mind. Just make yourself comfortable and doze off."

His eyes were looking fixedly into those of his visitor, who returned the stare without winking, but when Tommy raised his hands to make the familiar passes over his face, Hathway jumped up so quickly that he overturned his chair, and, with a dexterity which spoke of much practise, whipped out a revolver, which seemed to cover us both at once, and, as I looked into the barrel, I would have sworn that it was of the caliber of a twelve-inch gun. There was no hesitation on the part of either of us in obeying his sharp command of "Hands up!" and he backed toward the door.

"I ought to let daylight through both of you, but there's trouble enough about!" he snarled, as he put one hand behind him and removed the key from the lock. "I'm too old a bird to be caught by any such hocus-pocus as you tried to work, but don't you forget that I'll break better than even with you before I call it off."

We were both so surprised by his

violence that it was not until he had backed out, slammed the door, and locked it on the outside, that we lowered our hands; then, without speaking, Tommy darted through my bedroom and raised the shade. Hathway was already crossing the street, stuffing the revolver into his pocket, and, as he turned the corner, a man came from the shelter of an adjoining doorway and followed him. The shadower had no sooner disappeared than the English bicyclist who had followed Collier in the afternoon was after him.

Tommy gave an exclamation of satisfaction as he turned away from the window. "If the brute manages to escape being knocked on the head by one of his pals, it's small chance he'll have of making the frontier, with Le Garde's man after him!" he exclaimed, and, greatly to my surprise, he seized me by the shoulders and waltzed me around the studio.

"Are you going mad, or do you think being covered by a revolver in the hands of a desperate man is a joke?" I asked irritably, and his answering laugh was almost hysterical.

"While there's life there's hope!" he shouted, executing a clog-dance. "My boy, don't you see that the whole thing is a put-up job, and that it simply disproves the old saying that there is honor among thieves. Each one of them is trying to get ahead of the other, and our first guess was right. The body at the morgue is not hers, and Hathway has discovered the substitution. Collier, who planned the abduction, is still ignorant of that fact, and Hathway is trying to sell him out."

I threw myself into a chair and looked at him in amazement, and he seated himself opposite to me, and laughed.

"I'll have to reconstruct the case for you," he said confidently. "The abduction was planned, and from Hathway's admission we can assume that six people were concerned in it. Four of them we can pretty definitely place. Adams, Collier, Hathway, and the Calais Frenchman. Probably the actual work was entrusted to the unknown two,

and I suspect that they have thrown the others down and substituted a body to scare them off. From Hathway's remark about Collier's obstinacy, I judge that one of the others is a woman, which would explain how Miss Roberts was so easily inveigled from the house, and it was probably her voice which we heard in the cab. We must be wrong about the girl's financial position, for that gang is working for ransom. Collier plans the thing, and the others play their parts until it is accomplished; then the two active agents prepare a game of their own. It deceives Collier, who has been busy making a bluff to scare us off, and is inopportunately arrested for assaulting his cabman. I believe that he suspected that we had forestalled him and run off with her ourselves. Hathway is of the same opinion, but when he finds that she is not dead and is still a valuable asset, he tries to cut into what he believes is our game. He gives us credit for being as crooked as himself, and tries to sell his own crowd out. There's the case in a nutshell, and now that your Uncle Thomas is working to save the woman he loves instead of to avenge her death, you watch his smoke, and you'll see him succeed!"

His enthusiasm permitted of no argument, and when I attempted it he peremptorily ordered me to bed, that he might be free from interruption in working out his plans.

VI.

Early the next morning I was awakened by Tommy, who burst into my room waving a copy of the *Figaro* over his head. His face was pale and haggard from lack of sleep, but his eyes were bright with excitement, and there was not the slightest evidence of fatigue in his manner.

"*Le Mystère de la Pèlerine Rouge*' presents a new feature every minute," he said, as he threw the paper to me and I found that the entire front page was devoted to the case. The story was written about the very latest development, which seemed too absurd to

be credible; a burglary at the morgue the evening before, the only article stolen being the scarlet golf-cape which had given the name to "*Le Mystère!*" Several wild guesses were made as to the probable motive which could prompt such a peculiar theft—for the intrinsic value of the garment was trifling—and Tommy laughed as I haltingly translated them.

"Can you make anything out of it?" I asked, when I had finished, and he frankly admitted that he could hazard no more plausible reason than the wild theories of the journalists.

"A reason there must be, however," he continued. "The building opens at eight, and if we hurry we can be there at that time and get through our investigation before the crowd arrives. It is in just such apparently useless and trivial things that the criminal betrays himself, and I want to be on hand when the curtain goes up."

Early as we were, we had underestimated the craving for sensation of the Parisians, for although we arrived a good fifteen minutes before the doors were opened we found a crowd ahead of us, and we took our places at the end of a long line of the curious.

"Just remember that every one in this line is under close observation," muttered Tommy warningly, as we waited. "This is said to be the favorite hunting-ground of the police spy, and the slightest suspicious circumstance is reported at headquarters. We don't want to be put through the French third degree at this stage of the game."

"No, nor at any other stage," I answered nervously; and I wished myself well out of the whole affair, for even without his warning I had the uncomfortable feeling that we were being watched. A general exclamation of satisfaction from the waiting crowd as the doors were thrown open interrupted any further protest, however, and like the line before a theater box-office, the crowd filed slowly through the long, narrow building where the bodies of the unknown dead are exposed for the purposes of identification. Through the center, from end to end, runs a heavy

plate-glass partition, and behind it a half-dozen bodies were laid, each on a slanting table which afforded a perfect view of the faces which were lighted from skylights above.

The body of the girl was the last in the line, and I thought that we should never reach it, but the police kept the crowd in motion, and when I was at last in front of it I should have hurried past without urging had Tommy not restrained me by holding on to my coat.

"If I had to go through that experience every day, I doubt if I should have much appetite at the end of a week," he said, with a grimace, when we were once more in the street. "I suppose that you are convinced that Hathway told the truth—you could not mistake that body for Miss Roberts."

"I don't believe that I saw it, Tommy," I answered, with a shudder of disgust. "I was surfeited with horrors before I reached the end of the row."

"Well, I can assure you that it is not, but I am just as positive that the dress and shoes were worn by her night before last, and that the glove is the mate to the one I have in my pocket. Now, if you can explain the meaning of that, we ought to be able to make a pretty fair guess of the whole riddle."

"I'll leave it to you to fit it into your wonderful theory," I answered irritably, for my nerves were on edge. "I am willing to do anything in the world to help you, but I can't see that you are arriving anywhere, and I have a miserable feeling that we are watched."

"Of course we are," he answered placidly. "Whoever is responsible for abducting the girl has had an eye on us, but it's a poor game that two can't play at, and before I am through I shall return the compliment. For example, here comes our amiable friend Collier."

The American, closely followed by the Calais Frenchman, hurried from the building, and his face was a study. Bewilderment, resentment, fear, and anxiety seemed to be struggling for mastery in his mind, and he would have passed us without recognition if the Frenchman had not nudged him. There

was no bluster about him as he approached us, and Tommy nodded curtly in response to an unusually courteous salutation.

"Mr. Williams, I'm plumb flabbergasted," he said. "If you've been in that beastly hole, I suppose that you know that the body which was found in Miss Roberts' clothes is that of a woman who resembles her only in a very general way."

"Yes, and the most striking of her garments, the red golf-cape, has been stolen during the night," answered Tommy quietly.

"Damn the golf-cape—I wish I had never seen it!" Collier exclaimed irritably. "See here, Williams, I know enough to lay down when the cards are against me, and I know that I'm up against the real thing. If you'll play on the level with me, I'm open to any reasonable proposition."

Tommy's lip curled contemptuously, as he looked him over from head to foot. "I am not sure that I am disposed to play with you on any terms, but I might be induced to listen to a proposition from you, *Mr. Collier*," he answered.

The man looked at him sharply. "There's no use putting up a bluff unless you can back it," he said sullenly. "I admit that my name is Whitehead, but that won't hurt me nor help you. Some one has given me the double cross, but that's a matter I can attend to myself, and I want the girl. That's my proposition flat, and I'll stand for anything you propose in return, if you'll accept it."

"And will the other five indorse your offer?" asked Tommy, and his random shot went home.

"You leave them to me. I don't ask for indorsement from any one, and what I say goes," he answered eagerly.

Tommy shrugged his shoulders, and turned away. "I'll think it over," he said, as he signaled a passing cab. "You know where to find me, and I shall be at home this evening. You know that it might be courteous to consult the lady's wishes in the matter."

"Curse you, you've queered the

game, but I'll not stand for anything like that!" shouted Collier furiously, springing forward as Tommy's foot was on the step; but I jumped between them, and the Frenchman caught his companion by the arm and pulled him back.

"That's really quite unnecessary, Whitehead," said Tommy coolly, after giving direction to the driver. "I'll give you a little gratuitous advice; restrain that temper of yours if you want to do business with me. You know my address, but Hathway's game won't work twice."

"Monsieur has the spirit very tempestuous," said the cabman, turning on the box to speak to us as we drove away, leaving the Frenchman volubly expostulating with Collier, and Tommy smiled as he recognized in him the man who had been assaulted the day before. "This afternoon is the appearance in court for giving me the blow in the eye and he is not yet calm of his mind."

"I don't think that I have contributed to his calming down," said Tommy, grinning, as the cabman faced about. "If I knew as much about this game as Whitehead and Hathway think I know, my own mind would be considerably more at ease, but I shall try to justify their confidence before night. Now for an interview with the acidulous Madame Bernar, and I think that we can discover something of the young woman's whereabouts."

"Tommy, I don't suppose that there is an adult Parisian who has not heard of the affair of the red golf-cape by this time, and why hasn't she come forward to identify her lodger?" I asked, as the strangeness of the lack of identification suddenly occurred to me.

Tommy gave me a little pat of approval. "Really, you are waking up, old chap," he said, smiling. "That's the very point that I pondered over half the night, and unless my conclusions are all wrong it is because Madame Bernar knows perfectly well where Miss Roberts is secreted. We stupidly overlooked the fact that she was recommended to that pension by Adams, and when we reach the bottom of this little mystery

I think that we can label Madame Bernar as number five in this precious gang of crooks."

"By Jove, if you are right in that, it explains a whole lot of things which seemed incredible!" I admitted; and he gave the little nod of his head which always indicated absolute certainty.

"I am so well assured of it that I have no very great anxiety as to the safety of Miss Roberts," he answered confidently. "My impression is that she was not even exposed to the night air and that she has been imprisoned in the pension while we were sent on a wild-goose chase after a scarlet golf-cape. By Jove, we're not the only ones who have been fooled!" he exclaimed, as the cab turned into the street where the pension was situated. "Disguises are not confined to detectives, and Fred's sleuth has more the appearance of the missing number six!"

Coming from the door of the Maison Bernar, a red carnation in his button-hole and jauntily swinging a gold-headed cane in a carefully gloved hand, was the Frenchman who had devoted so much of his time to idling in the American Bar. The large reading-glasses were replaced by a monocle, and the elasticity of his step belied the whiteness of his hair, but although we passed close to him in the bright sunlight and neither of us scrupled to look sharply at him, we could detect no trace of make-up on his wrinkled face.

Madame Bernar's reception was no more cordial than when we had called upon her two days before, and her very expressive shoulders indicated absolute indifference when Tommy bluntly asked her if she had notified the police of the disappearance of her lodger, or if she had read the latest sensation in the papers.

"The movements of the American mees concern me not at all," she said coldly. "It is to me to provide for the comfort of the guests of the Maison Bernar, but it is not of my province to follow those who leave in the manner so irregular. The effects of the mees are to be had for the asking, but I concern not myself with police matters."

"But the police may concern themselves very actively in this matter, madame," answered Tommy quietly. "I expect that before the day is over there will be orders from America which will stimulate them to activity, and I am quite prepared to testify that Miss Roberts was seen to enter this house alive and well, and that none of her friends have seen her since that time."

"The testimony of monsieur will, without doubt, be interesting to the police," she answered, bowing. "Does monsieur, perhaps, insinuate that her place of hiding is of my knowledge?"

"I never insinuate, madame," said Tommy. "I sometimes give a friendly warning, however, and I would suggest that it might avoid a great deal of scandal and trouble if Miss Roberts were to reappear. Of course, I am not in a position to promise immunity, but it would undoubtedly save a great deal of embarrassment to Mr. Adams who recommended her to you."

"In that case, I would suggest that you communicate with Mr. Adams and not detain me from the duties of the *ménage*, monsieur," she answered, rising from her chair, and making an unmistakable gesture of dismissal. "You will permit, monsieur, that I give the order to the *concierge* to observe closely the face of monsieur, that when he calls again he may be told that I am not at home."

"If I ever call again, I believe that you will receive me," answered Tommy, flushing angrily. Madame Bernar smiled incredulously and shrugged her thin shoulders, and when we beat a retreat I felt that Tommy had gained little by the interview.

"She is what one might call a cold-blooded proposition," he remarked, as we drove away from the house. "I wonder if this thing has extended to murder, after all. There is no doubt in my mind of the woman's complicity, and I believe the attempt to run us down with that cab was part of the design to throw us off the scent. When we made inquiries yesterday she was purposely insulting to keep us away from the house, and I shouldn't be sur-

prised to find that the other woman who wore the cape was done away with. She had served her purpose when we had seen her. That worries me, for I can't leave the little girl in the power of people whom we suspect to be capable of such cold-blooded murder. I'll wait until evening for the 'old friend' who is on the way, and then go to Le Garde with what I know. I shouldn't mind having him put her through a course of sprouts."

"Unless you see some good purpose for delaying until evening, I suggest that we report to him at once," I suggested earnestly. "I am frank to say that I feel out of my element in this sort of a game, and I don't like the associations. There isn't one of those brutes who would hesitate to stick a knife into us, and there are a whole lot of things I want to do before I peg out."

"I don't think there is much danger in daylight, so long as we remain in the center of the city," answered Tommy a little sarcastically. "You know that I take a rather unreasonable pride in bringing all the threads of a case together before I act, and it pays in the end. The general rendezvous of the gang seems to be at Fred's, and we can't breakfast at a better place. I'm curious to see if I can't give a little jolt to the complacency of our suspected number six." He was a masterful person, and as I had yet to see him fail in one of his investigations, I silently acquiesced, for experience had taught me that he usually had good and sufficient reason for every move he made.

The café was practically deserted, the Frenchman was at his accustomed seat, the inevitable glass of absinth before him, and Fred himself was standing with his hands in his pockets, gloomily looking out of the window.

"Say, Mr. Williams, it's worse than ever," he complained, in a low voice. "I'm going to register a kick if they don't call 'em off. Collier is in here a dozen times a day, and there's a new man with him each time. He wants me to appear in court with him to-day to swear that he was justified by continual

annoyance in slugging that cabby, and my private opinion is that the whole job was put up by the police. Collier overpaid him, and they don't usually raise a holler unless a man is stingy. The man *has* pestered him, and I'm beginning to size him up for a *mouchard*."

"Fred, I don't believe that you're as clever as you think you are in spotting a disguised sleuth," answered Tommy, purposely raising his voice so that the Frenchman could hear what he said. "You know a man may have other reasons for not wishing to be recognized. A crook who has rounded on his pals wouldn't be particularly safe if they caught him, and still it might be necessary for him to keep track of their movements."

The Frenchman gave not the slightest evidence of understanding, and I saw that Tommy was distinctly disappointed, but the entrance of other patrons prevented Fred from replying. Among them was Collier, still accompanied by the Calais Frenchman, and he inquired eagerly if Adams had arrived. I happened to be looking at the disguised man at the moment, and I noticed that Collier's question produced an effect where Tommy's insinuation had failed, for he gave a little start, and forgot his pretense of absorption in the paper as he listened eagerly for the answer.

"Not yet, sir," answered Fred, who was dexterously mixing the ingredients for the only genuine Martini to be obtained in Paris. "Mr. Hathway was in about an hour ago, and said that he wouldn't be here until evening." Collier muttered an unintelligible comment and turned to leave the bar, but catching sight of Tommy, he walked over to our table.

"Mr. Williams, I made a star-spangled jackass of myself this morning," he said apologetically. "I'm willing to eat the mess of crow that I deserve, but I hope you'll think the proposition over. I'm just about crazy over the thing, and if you knew how much I suffered you'd loosen up a little. Isn't there something doing on the basis I suggested?"

"I think that we'll let it go until the lady is consulted, as I told you," answered Tommy indifferently; and an expression of hatred such as I had never seen came to Collier's face.

"You don't know what you are doing," he fairly hissed. "There is no place on earth that I won't follow you, and I'd rather see her dead than with any one else."

"Rather a dog-in-the-manger attitude, that, I should say," answered Tommy, looking at him curiously; but I noticed that his hand slipped quietly toward his hip pocket, and he kept his eyes intently on his adversary's face. "That's my last word in the matter, and while I confess that I do feel a bit sorry for you, I don't think that you deserve it."

Collier's face was very white, and a tiny speck of blood appeared on his lip where he had bitten it, but he made no answer, and, turning away, he hooked his arm in that of the Frenchman, and they left the café.

"A fellow-feeling makes one wondrous kind," quoted Tommy soberly, as he watched the retreating figures. "I don't suppose that I shall ever be much nearer death than I was at that man's hands a moment since, and yet I pity him. It's a strange thing that, no matter how hardened and vicious a man may become, he is always susceptible to the influence of a really good woman."

"And a stranger one that a man can never fall so low that he can't find a good woman to fall in love with him," I answered, and Tommy looked at me questioningly.

"Is that a slap at me or an insinuation that he has gained the affection of Miss Roberts?" he asked half-seriously, and it seemed too good an opportunity to miss.

"Tommy, if it comes down to a question of caring for her, I am free to say that he is making out the better case," I said. "We know that the man is not straight, and it is probable that his original intentions were to use her to further the purposes of the organization which he has built up to war against society. The scheme was care-

fully planned but went wrong, and all the trouble and expense which they have been to as an organization came to nothing through the treachery of his subordinates. He disregards all that, for we are convinced that he has fallen in love with the girl, and is willing to make any sacrifice to have her returned in safety. I'll wager that if he felt half as suspicious of Madame Bernar as you do, he would waste no time in wringing her scrawny neck to make her give up the truth."

"Unfortunately, I am a law-abiding person, and don't resort to that particular method of obtaining information," answered Tommy dryly. "I feel reasonably assured that Miss Roberts is in no imminent danger, and I have not enough grounds to go to the police with my suspicions that Madame Bernar is detaining her. No demand for ransom has been made, and we have no proof that a crime has been committed. I could tell them that Collier was using an alias, and that he was suspected of being a crook, but that is hardly sufficient to warrant his arrest. I believe that he is being watched for evidence on suspicion of some other crime, and when Adams arrives I shall go to Le Garde and report the whole case to him. He can ascertain the connection between Adams and Madame Bernar, and I think the inexplicable finding of the clothes of Miss Roberts on another woman's body and the subsequent theft of the most conspicuous garment will make him sit up and take notice. You are not doing me justice, for you believe that I am losing sight of the safety of the woman I care more for than any one in the world in order to bring off a sensational solution of a very mysterious problem. On the contrary, I am insuring her safety by apparent inaction until I have enough evidence to make the police act quickly. If the fears of her captors were excited, they might make way with her before the police arrived. Inaction is not pleasant under the circumstances, but I wish to be sure that all of the gang can be accounted for before I make a move."

He was obdurate and silent for the

rest of the day, which we spent in absolute idleness at the studio, but as the time for the arrival of the Calais train approached he grew nervous, and I suggested that we go to the station to meet it. He welcomed anything which seemed like being useful, and from the shelter of a closed cab we saw the man who had escorted Miss Roberts to Victoria a week before come hurriedly from the exit and jump into a fiacre. As he drove away, the English bicyclist followed close behind him, and Tommy's eyes were dancing when he ordered our *cocher* to join the procession.

The coming of Adams was apparently a matter of importance to the men whom we regarded as conspirators, for we found them all together about a table in the American Bar when we arrived there a quarter of an hour later. Tommy had promised me that once he was assured that they were together he would waste no time in going to the police, and he nodded to me significantly when he saw that the Frenchman whom he called "Number Six," was, as usual, sipping absinth in his accustomed place. For the first time we heard his voice, for when we entered he pushed the glass away from him, and in a sharp tone ordered a cognac. The bicyclist, who was refreshing himself with a fizz after his exertions, put down his glass and strolled out, and Tommy followed him, after a hurried injunction to me not to lose sight of Adams until he returned. It was not a task which I relished, and I was distinctly relieved when, a moment later, the boy at the door brought me a message from Williams, asking me to speak to him a moment outside. About fifty feet from the door our cab was standing, the driver beside the open door, and when I poked my head inside to ask Tommy what he wanted, it was quickly enveloped in the rug, the driver gave me a vigorous push and slammed the door behind me, and before I could realize what had happened, I found my hands securely pinioned, and felt that I was being driven rapidly away.

It was not an enviable situation, but no undue violence had been done me,

and after a pair of old-fashioned handcuffs had been securely fixed on my wrists the rug was removed from my head and I found that I was the prisoner of two Frenchmen whom I had never seen before. I started to protest, but when one of them grinned and held up the rug, as if he would replace it over my head, I relapsed into silence, but I was greatly relieved when the cab pulled up in front of the carriage-entrance to the prefecture of police. The great doors swung open noiselessly to admit us, and as we drove into the courtyard I heard them close and the bolts shot behind us, and I realized that I was a prisoner of the French law, absolutely lost to knowledge of the outside world until it should relax the grip upon me.

A very crestfallen and sullen Tommy Williams was sitting on a wooden bench in the long, narrow room with barred windows to which I was led, his wrists manacled, a uniformed policeman on either side of him. He started to speak as my captors motioned me to be seated, but one of the officers sternly enjoined silence. For a miserable half-hour we waited in that cheerless apartment, and then we were joined by Collier, Adams, Hathway, and the Calais Frenchman, each of them handcuffed and held by two officers. The tinkle of a bell from an adjoining apartment was the signal for the procession to be put in motion and we were escorted, each between two gendarmes, through the opposite door to the one we had entered.

Seated behind a large table was a quiet, clerical-looking man who might have been of any age from thirty to sixty, his face in repose an imperturbable mask. He glanced up from his writing as we were brought in, and with a quiet word of approval to the sergeant in charge, motioned to a man who had been seated in the corner to come forward. In spite of all injunctions to be quiet, I gave an exclamation of relief and started toward him, for as he came into the circle of light in which we stood, I recognized the smiling, rubicund visage of our old friend and ally, Detective-sergeant Clancy!

"Sure, Munseer Le Garde, you've pinched the bunch av thim an' two over!" he exclaimed as he recognized us, and the man behind the table bowed and smiled.

"I give good measure, my colleague, and the two of whom you did not inform me have been to me more trouble than all the others," he answered.

Clancy grinned as he looked at our manacled wrists.

"Clancy, for Heaven's sake, don't waste time, but tell him that he's made a mistake!" exclaimed Tommy earnestly. "There's a woman in danger, and every minute counts!"

"Be aisy, now, Mr. Williams, if ut's Miss Roberts that you're worryin' about," answered Clancy reassuringly. "Sure ut's meself that saw her not five minuts ago, an' she's safe and sound."

Tommy gave a sigh of relief and stepped back, while Clancy, in no very flattering terms, explained to Le Garde that we were not wanted by the American police. He generously admitted that Tommy had been of some trifling service to him in unraveling previous mysteries, and Le Garde shrugged his shoulders and motioned to the officers to remove our irons.

"It is a mistake most regrettable, gentlemen, but we do not recognize the amateur in France," he said, and his apology was more than half-sarcasm. "The others, I trust, are not of that variety."

Clancy looked them over with a grin of satisfaction on his Hibernian mug and shook his head. "Sure, they're all wool an' a yard wide in th' professional class, an' we've got 'em dead to rights this time," he said.

Le Garde touched a bell on his desk, the door opened, and standing in the full light, the scarlet golf-cape about her shoulders, was Miss Roberts! For a moment she looked at us and then started forward with a little cry, and Tommy advanced with outstretched arms. All that they clasped was the golf-cape which slipped from her shoulders as she threw her arms around Collier and hid her face on his breast, her body shaken with hysterical sobbing.

Tommy's face was a study in bewilderment, chagrin, and grief, as he stared first at the cape and then at the sobbing girl, but Le Garde rose and relieved him of the garment, and motioned him to a seat.

"Monsieur the Amateur feels regret at the loss of the lady, but I can assure him that she left him with the better part," he said cynically as he opened his penknife. "It is a garment of the most remarkable, but its hidden virtues are even greater than its conspicuousness."

A few deft slashes with the penknife, the sound of ripping, tearing cloth, and the lining tore away from the thick scarlet wool, revealing a glittering array of jewels which might well be worth a king's ransom, each carefully sewed to the cloth and half-imbedded in its heavy texture.

"*Voilà, messieurs et madame!*" exclaimed Le Garde, as he held it so that the stones twinkled in the light. "You see before you a most priceless garment, for it carries the loot of the great jewel robbery in Union Square entrusted to the care of Madame Collier, née La Mothe of Montreal!"

Tommy was fairly stunned with surprise, and after Le Garde had ordered the removal of the prisoners he buried his face in his hands and did not look up until a woman warder had taken the woman we had known as Miss Roberts back to the cells.

"Monsieur, France does not encourage amateur police, but a Frenchman has always sympathy for one who is disappointed in the affair of the heart, which is, after all, the greatest thing," said Le Garde, placing his hand kindly on his shoulder. "That the woman you loved is unworthy is unfortunate, but she does credit to your discrimination, for she is beautiful. She is, in fact, the friend most intimate of Collier, who entrusted it to her to smuggle the jewels from New York to be disposed of here. She speaks our language perfectly, as monsieur may remember from hearing her protests in the cab, for we are always gallant to our women prisoners and let them talk. I regret that I

caused you distress by the manner of her arrest at the house of Madame Bernar, my valuable ally, but we do not scare accomplices until our net is full. The golf-cape was too valuable to remain longer at liberty, and it was the bait which drew Adams, who is the most important member of the gang, to Paris. For six weeks Collier, who planned the robbery, has been under observation, and, one by one, his confederates have joined him. That I mistook you for one is natural, although the New York police had not sent your description. The body at the morgue was obtained from a hospital, and the clothing of our prisoner placed upon it to draw Adams from London. When he arrived I ordered cognac instead of absinth, and—my net was drawn."

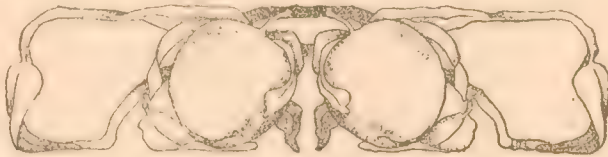
He disappeared for a moment behind a screen, and when he came out he was again the absinth drinker of the American Bar, a man of sixty with seamed face and watery eyes, and he

bowed his acknowledgment of my exclamation of admiration.

"And now, messieurs, I shall not detain you. In return for my explanation I ask you to elucidate one point. My experts, who are the cleverest in Europe, have been puzzled for two days over your code, which does not answer to any of the known systems. If you will explain it, you will put me under a great obligation."

He held out a copy of the first cable from Longley, but Tommy apparently had heard little of his speech and made no effort to take it. I saw that he was dazed by the developments of the last half-hour, and took him by the arm.

"You will find Detective-sergeant Clancy thoroughly familiar with it," I said, as Tommy rose mechanically to his feet, and I led him from the room, leaving Clancy busily employed in instructing the great *Le Garde* in the mysteries of "English as she is spoke" on the Bowery.



THE SANCTITY OF THE WHITE ELEPHANT

VERY remarkable is the reverence paid in Indo-China to the so-called white or albino elephant, which should rather be called the light-colored elephant, for its peculiarity usually goes no further than gray or flesh-colored patches.

At the court of Siam, and of other Indo-China potentates, the rare specimen lives—cherished as a treasure, richly lodged, sumptuously fed by obsequious dignitaries, and escorted by humbler members of his own species, ranking, indeed, as almost one of the royal family. To the people this creature is a walking idol, and any belittlement of his sacred character makes a very sore point.

Mr. Barnum once sent out to Siam for a white elephant, but the king refused to deal in so illustrious flesh; and one at length secured by the showman's agent, regardless of expense, died before embarkation—poisoned, it was believed, by some fanatical worshiper. The King of Burmah proved more compliant. He agreed to part with one of his sacred stock for a fancy price, but on condition that it went attended by two Buddhist priests, who might intercede for the sacrilege of its surrender.

Another showman had the impudence to exhibit a chalked-white elephant in a circus at Bangkok, a kind of spectacle very much admired here. The scandalized audience discovered the cheat, prophesied divine vengeance on such impiety; and, in fact, both elephant and exhibitor are stated to have died shortly afterward.

Strange Cases of a Medical Free-lance

By W. B. M. Ferguson

Author of "Garrison's Finish," "A Night With Lispering Jimmie," Etc.

V.—THE CASE OF THE ANEMIC PATIENT

(A Complete Story)



SIDE from the doctor"—and I intimated Tinkle with my pipe—"I think, perhaps, the lawyer has the greatest opportunity for discovering the ubiquitous family skeleton——"

"Apropos, apropos, Little One?" said my friend mildly, eying me over the book he had been submerged in for the past hour.

"Why," I returned, "I had a curious experience to-day. A client——"

"A client. Forsooth the man talks as if he were accustomed to the plural. A client! S-h-h," added Tinkle, in burlesque astonishment, holding aloft a warning hand. "Softly, softly. My heart, you know. Most sensitive to shocks. Whisper—you really have a client at last? O most noble misinterpreter of man's law——"

"I won't tell you about it if you're in that vein," I said stiffly. "And it's interesting."

"Murder, murder, murder! Orful, orful, orful!" shrieked a discordant voice. This sentiment was from Mary Jane, Tinkle's parrot.

"Is the dear lady right? Is it murder?" asked my friend, as he covered the protesting female with a handkerchief. "There, go to sleep," he commanded. "Though I don't wonder that the news of Boyd having a client has outraged your maidenly feelings. There, there, hush." And Tinkle, in his eccentric way, slowly rocked the

cage while he hummed a lullaby painfully out of tune.

He made such an absurd picture of anxious maternity that I was forced to laugh. "Oh, leave that monstrosity alone," I urged. "There, sit down and smoke and listen. Denuded of superfluities, the case is this: My client's name is Bailey Lorme—widower with two daughters—Alice, twenty-five; Eunice, twenty-one. They are half-sisters. The elder of straight American stock; the younger, on her mother's side a descendant of the old Broghli family of Naples——"

"Broghli? Indeed!" Tinkle's eyes were on the ancient tome lying open on his thin knees. "I have no interest in the family genealogy of unknown——"

"I am merely stating the particulars as I came to know them, so that you may fully understand the case—for I want you to interest yourself in it," I explained warmly. "I think I evinced sufficient interest in *your* cases in the past, and at least you might simulate——"

"There, there, Little One. No offense meant. I freely forgive you. See, I am all sweet attention. I will close this very interesting book and dedicate my ears to you. Proceed."

"Well," I prefaced, splicing the severed thread of narrative, "it seems the Misses Lorme went to Europe to finish their education chaperoned by an Italian marchesa, Carmen del something or other—Lodi, I think."

"Oh, one of these semitarnished society pilots?" inserted Tinkle, with a grunt. "They are a predatory crowd."

"Presumably. You see, Mr. Lorme made his money in lard, and, though a first-rate man, is not quite the type to flock with nobility. As you say, the marchesa is a regular society pilot—one who furnishes chaperonage and etiquette, entrées, etc., at so much per head. The Misses Lorme remained under her protecting wing for three years; their father, in the intervals of lard-making, running over to see them. They returned to New York last year, and Mr. Lorme, being accidentally called West, the girls temporarily resided with the marchesa, who had taken up her old quarters. One month later the father returned. Eunice at once went to live with him, but Alice, the elder, positively refused. Nor will she return to her home. She will furnish no explanation of her attitude, but simply says that she doesn't care to go. It is this that Mr. Lorme has consulted me about. He loves his daughter, and naturally wishes to have the benefit of her society. But, as she is of age, he cannot coerce her, nor would he if he could. He is desperately hurt that she evidently prefers a stranger. He intimates that the marchesa must have gained some strange, powerful influence over the girl—probably hypnotic."

"And how would the marchesa benefit by such a control—admitting there is such an ascendancy?" asked Tinkle, with pursed lips.

"She has considerable property in her own name. Mr. Lorme suspects it is the stake. You see, on the face of it, it offers a delicate legal question. The girl is entirely within her own rights, and yet she is not acting normally, and her father naturally wishes to protect her from any adventuresses. There seems to be no reason for her attitude; her father, so I understand, has been most indulgent and——"

"Perhaps too indulgent," commented Tinkle dryly. "Parents place their children in convents or under some equally omnipotent influence for years,

and then subsequently wonder why the poor dears are so indifferent to them. I think your case may simply resolve itself into one of arrested affection."

"Then why not the younger sister?" I argued. "She should be even more impressionable."

"It depends entirely upon temperament, Little One. The younger, you say, had an Italian mother—of the Broghli. Her affections are deeper, perhaps. Have you seen either of the girls?"

"Well—er—that is, I have seen Miss Eunice. Naturally she is as much distressed as her father. And the latter is so disturbed that he has threatened to place Miss Alice in an asylum, if that is the only way she can be delivered from the marchesa's influence. But this is only a threat, I know. However, he is not at all certain that she is entirely free from some malady, and he wishes you to represent him in the affair. I have made an appointment for you to-morrow."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Tinkle. "I admire your diplomacy. And so all this prelude was but to introduce the fact that you had taken liberties with my liberty? What is the use of living if a man has to work——"

"But I assure you Mr. Lorme had already heard of you—that 'atavistic patient' case—and he would have rooted you out, anyway. Like the alderman's stomach, your reputation precedes you."

Tinkle sniffed and sighed resignedly, then picked up the discarded tome. "Well, if I have to listen to the case professionally, at least I needn't listen to your amateur blither. No doubt the affair will be as tame as Mary Jane. Good night. I'm going to read."

That meant that Tiberius W. Tinkle would be, mentally, as distant as if he were in the Holy Land.

The following afternoon a delegation of five visited the Marchesa del Lodi. Besides Tinkle, Mr. Lorme, Eunice, and myself, there was a certain Mr. Wallace James—a good-looking sort of "haw-haw" individual with a spongy hand and immaculate manner. He was

introduced as some distant relation of the family. Tinkle and Mr. Lorme paired off, as did Eunice and myself, while the handsome Mr. Wallace James made a very distinguished if inefficient rear-guard.

If I had had time for reflection, I no doubt would have considered what a peculiar procession we formed—marching in force upon a girl who had the legal power of willing her own life. But I was enlisted in the case against her, and, aside from professional interest and the suspicion that wrong was striving to down right, the brightness of Miss Eunice's eyes, the moist scarlet of her lips, the gleam of her teeth, the swift cleverness of her tongue—all the insistent charm of fresh young womanhood, eloquently enlisted my sympathies and services. Oh, no, I wasn't in love with Miss Eunice, but—well, some girls are rather nice.

Tinkle, having only the unlovely eyes of Mr. Lorme to look into, took rather a burlesque view of our crusade. He listened in silence to his companion's honest, if heated, opinion of the Marchesa del Lodi, but there was a well-remembered current of irony twitching his nose and upper lip.

I had expected rather a stormy meeting with the redoubtable marchesa, but was agreeably surprised. She received the delegation with becoming courtesy and consideration. She was a fine, full-blown rose of a woman. Certainly impressive enough looking to conceive a more worthy design than the one we suspected she was engineering.

She listened in silence as Mr. Lorme refurrowed old ground in which were rooted some not very kindly sentiments.

"It's a most absurd situation, madame," he concluded heatedly. "I think you will agree with me at least on that point. That a father cannot have the love, the society of his own child——"

"Is that my fault?" asked the marchesa quietly.

"It is, madame; it is," declared my client. "It is malign influence——"

The Marchesa del Lodi cut short the remainder by an expressive shrug. "It is useless for us to endeavor to under-

stand each other, Signor Lorme. You come with a prejudiced heart. I love your daughter—in the best way. Indeed, I have repeatedly asked her to comply with your wishes, but"—another shrug—"what will you? She elects to stay with me. She has her own reasons. I know them not. Perhaps—you do."

Lorme successfully faced her suddenly searching eyes.

"What do you mean—insinuate?" he asked sharply. "Why, I love my daughter, and—and she used to love me," he finished simply, a tremor in his voice. "And to think I am forced to have a stranger intercede for me as I now do, madame!" he added, with fine feeling. "I ask you not as a stranger, an enemy, but as a friend. Surely you know a father's love. I am an old man, with my days behind me. I have worked, looked forward to the time when I will find my lost youth, lost hopes in my children. I have done my duty by them as God has shown it to me, and now——"

The marchesa spread her eloquent hands—soft hands, white hands, which I, somehow, likened to tigers' claws.

"I can only repeat what I have said. You seem to infer that I have taken advantage of my official position to undermine your influence, Signor Lorme. That is false. I, too, have certain ideas of duty, and have endeavored to fulfil my trust in harmony with my honor. Your daughter Eunice will favor me with the justice of so much."

Miss Eunice pursed her lips, hummed in a manner that might mean anything, but did not reply.

A red spot commenced to glow in the marchesa's olive cheek. "Because," she began grandly, "one must earn one's bread—but enough! I do not come of a family whose attitude ever necessitated apology. Your daughter, Signor Lorme, continues to favor me with her society just so long as she desires."

The woman certainly looked regal, and, however I might suspect her moral rectitude, I was compelled to own the sovereignty of her physical perfection.

"And is this your ultimatum, madame?" asked Mr. Lorme sternly. "Then I will use the law——"

"You know you have been at perfect liberty to use force long, long ago, signor. My house has ever been open to you or your representatives."

"Madame," said the stern old man, "I have never bought nor forced the love of a child. My daughter comes to my house, her rightful home, until such time as she cares to marry, unsubsidized and unfettered, or not at all. You know that your grant is worthless. Nor can the law give what the child withholds. But the law can guard personal wealth as the doctor can watch over personal health. And here they are, madame"—indicating Tinkle and myself—"and here they will come at my pleasure. And I warn you, madame, if either health or wealth be tampered with in the slightest extent, you will speedily learn that a father can hate as well as love."

The marchesa was silent for some time. "Your daughter's health is very dear to me likewise," she said finally, in a troubled voice. "I do not understand it—she is so indifferent to everything. Very often to me. Your representatives will be always welcome, Signor Lorme, though I trust neither will be required. A friend of mine, Doctor Marucci, has seen Alice at my request. He says she is suffering from anemia—deficiency of the blood, is it not?"

I saw Tinkle's eyes quiver. Since his arrival those eyes had never left the face of the marchesa.

"Oh, so you already have a doctor?" Tinkle murmured. "It is not professional etiquette to call in another without consulting——"

"Tut, tut," cut in Mr. Lorme impatiently, "you are *my* doctor—if you will be. At least I can have a specialist look after my girl."

"Doctor Marucci is merely a friend," said the marchesa quietly. "He will readily give precedence to Doctor Tinkle." On the latter's suggestion, she led the way to the library, where Alice Lorme was reading.

I saw a very pale girl, with a great

head of blond hair, draped negligently over a chair, a book lying unheeded on her lap, her chin sunk listlessly on a flaccid hand. She could not but have heard our conversation, and yet it had, apparently, not caused the slightest impression on her profoundly indifferent attitude. Her eyes flickered for a moment with animation as they rested upon her father and sister, but almost instantly relapsed into their former curiously abstracted look.

Mr. Lorme stood very erect, his eyes fastened broodingly upon his eldest child. Finally he spoke, very kindly, very simply, very much to the point. "Alice, girl, I am still waiting for you to come home. Are you ready yet?"

Alice yawned, tapping her lips with a delicate hand.

"Really, father"—another yawn—"I don't care to move—to go anywhere—I really don't care," she repeated wearily.

"Not even to your father's house?" asked Mr. Lorme steadily.

The girl slowly shook her top-heavy, golden head.

"I don't care—to—go—anywhere," she repeated monotonously.

"You are feeling quite well?" pursued Mr. Lorme.

"Quite. I do wish people wouldn't pester me so—I can't go anywhere," added Alice, in a sudden burst of irritation.

Mr. Lorme compressed his lips. "Good-by, then," he began. But Eunice had gone swiftly to her half-sister, and, kneeling by the chair, was eloquently pleading her father's cause. It was no use. Alice loved them all very much. Of course she loved them, but really she didn't care to go anywhere just at present.

Mr. Lorme turned dejectedly away, mutely requesting Tinkle to remain. I was quite sure by now that Miss Alice was far from normal, and I hoped that Tinkle, in his examination of her, might find the answer to this peculiar riddle.

Eunice bade a reluctant adieu to her strange sister, promising to see her the following morning. The immaculate Mr. James, who during the interview

had preserved a somewhat languishing attitude, staring fixedly, pulling at shoe-string mustache, coughing importantly, etc., now bowed over Miss Alice's hand, and, in short, altogether conducted a most gallant and highly effective farewell. There was a potent woe and incipient daring in his excessively mild eye that eloquently conveyed, however impotent his tongue, that, on the whole, he considered Miss Alice a very fair damsel indeed—one whose distress it would give him exceeding happiness to relieve, if he could but think of a way.

Leaving the apartment, minus Tinkle, our party almost collided with a small, stuffy-looking man, who displayed an extravagantly high collar, and owned a curious affectation of pulling at his neck, as if he were in the last throes of strangulation. He begged our pardon for his share of the imminent collision in a felicitous phrase, accentuated by the suave accent and graceful gestures inherent in the Latin races.

As we entered the elevator I saw that he had stopped at the apartment we had just left, and I had no difficulty in identifying him as the Doctor Marucci the marchesa had mentioned. From my chance observation, I summed him up as a rather wily character; one whom a dark night would favor.

My return journey was not so pleasant as my arrival, for, by some unhappy design of the gods, I found myself riveted to the brooding Mr. Lorme, while the immaculate James was paired with the pretty little Miss Eunice.

"And what do you think of your fair patient?" I asked Tinkle that night on his return. I had been impatiently awaiting his verdict. My eccentric friend gravely produced his much-dreaded flute, and commenced to murder "*Traümérei*" with all signs of the most lively satisfaction.

"Beautiful, beautiful," he murmured ecstatically on its conclusion. "You will notice, Boyd, that the slurring of the seventh note and the holding of the— Oh, you were speaking of

Miss Lorme? Well, I can't say. As I had expected, she is a blonde. Deleroux, that delightful, if caustic, Frenchman, has written most learnedly on the peculiarities of the two types; the xanthous, blond, and the melanic, brunette. I think the Misses Lorme are typical examples of the subtle but unmistakable differentiation——"

"Please forget technicalities for once," I implored. Tinkle is irritatingly prolix at times.

"Why, Little One, I mean that Miss Alice's heritage is a charming, impressionable, and slightly fickle temperament."

"So you stick to the arrested-affectation theory?"

"Why not?" parried my friend blandly. "By the way, that Doctor Marucci happened in just after you left."

"Yes, we almost ran him down in the hall. And you agree with him that Miss Lorme is merely suffering from anemia?"

"Oh, undoubtedly, Little One."

Tinkle's manner irritated me strangely.

"I think that simply because I am deeply interested in the case you treat it with such profound flippancy," I said hotly. "I am sure there is something behind Miss Lorme's strange attitude. She doesn't look very well, even if she says she is. And I don't like that marchesa a little bit."

"Are you deeply interested in the case or—Miss Eunice?" asked Tinkle blandly. "Don't try to look so guileless, dear Strephon. I noted that Chloe's bright eyes——"

"Oh, that's absurd nonsense, Tinkle, and you know it. Mr. Lorme's my client. I naturally feel for him in his predicament."

"And, naturally, you wish to carry it to a successful conclusion. The more dramatic a climax the better. What advice did you give Mr. Lorme—if it's a fair question?"

"It was on my suggestion that he appealed to the marchesa as a friend. You see with what result. She's impervious to everything—even money. I found occasion to—er—broach the

subject, and she—er—got quite angry. Evidently I had not mentioned a large enough amount."

"Evidently," said Tinkle dryly. "You're dead set against the marchesa, eh?"

"I am," I said sternly. "I am going to look up her record. She can't fool me with her good looks and acting, however they might influence you, Tinkle. I am not one of those weak characters whom a beautiful woman can influence at pleasure."

"Of course you're not," agreed my friend soberly. But there was something in his eye I didn't fancy—a certain benign raillery.

"It's a very humdrum affair, Boyd, but for you sake I'll continue to visit my patient. I like to help the deserving, and if by making a case I can further the designs of Strephon upon fair Chloe——"

I slammed the door on the rest of Tinkle's badinage.

"Have you unearthed anything yet against your friend the marchesa?" asked Tinkle two evenings later. He was thumbing over the same decayed volume he had been immersed in for the past two nights.

"I haven't been very successful," I admitted grudgingly. "The Italian consul speaks rather highly of her, in fact—but you never can tell."

"And how is the love-affair—I mean the interests of your client?" pursued Tinkle blandly. "I'm afraid you're heading for the rocks. I rather think that sublime ass, Mr. Wallace James, has designs on that quarter, eh?"

"You can't 'draw' me," I laughed, idly selecting a pipe. "Your extreme penetration is at fault for once. It is Miss Alice Mr. James is in love with. I am the family adviser, and should know."

"U-m-m," hummed Tinkle abstractedly. "Well, it's evident that Miss Alice doesn't reciprocate. Ah," he finished expectantly as the bell rang, "there's some one I'm expecting. Sit where you are, Boyd. Perhaps we may have rather an exciting evening."

Here our silent housekeeper showed in no less a personage than the little stuffy-looking man, Doctor Marucci.

I was introduced.

"I congratulate you on the possession of a very clever friend—Doctor Tinkle," said the doctor politely to me, with a funny little bow. "We have struck up quite an *entente cordiale*." He selected a cigarette and an easy chair. "He is very kindly going to demonstrate to me his new discovery regarding the treatment of the tubercle bacilli——"

"Before we enter into that, doctor," said Tinkle quietly, "there is something else I would value your opinion on." He went into his small laboratory, and returned with a vial containing a meager amount of some clear, limpid liquid.

"Do you know what this is—and what it is used for?" he asked, very gravely.

As Doctor Marucci took the vial, Tinkle switched one of the overhanging student-lamps full upon his face, and I noted the curious, searching, watchful stare of his keen eyes as the Italian's swarthy features were bleached by the pitiless glare. Doctor Marucci stood immovable. Only mild curiosity, succeeded by perplexity, was depicted on his face. Finally he gingerly wet his finger with the liquid, and touched it to his tongue.

"It is new to me," he said, with a shake of the head. "It tastes somewhat like arsenic, does it not? What is it, and what are its properties?"

My friend bestowed a final stare on the little man, and then, with a half-sigh, switched off the light.

"Oh, it's merely some stuff of my own," he explained abstractedly. "A stimulant. Now about this tuberculosis——" And he launched upon a heavy sea of medical rhetoric.

"Rather a nice, clever little chap," commented Tinkle, when the doctor had gone.

"Yes, but you didn't bring him here just to ascertain that," I said, my interest long at tension. "Or, rather, you

did, Tinkle. It was a trap! You suspected him of something—and you were wrong.”

My friend broodingly sucked at his pipe in silence.

“Do you know what that stuff was?” he asked abstractedly, at length.

“If Doctor Marucci didn’t, how should I—a layman?”

“It was the long-lost Manna of St. Nicholas, of Bari,” continued my eccentric friend, evidently communing with himself; a way he has when deeply involved in any problem.

“And what on earth is the long-lost Manna of St. Nicholas, of Bari?” I asked, sitting up.

Tinkle slowly thumbed over the leaves of the ancient tome. “Very interesting work,” he commented, in the same abstracted manner. “It’s a monograph on one of the lost arts. Do you know what the lost arts are, Little One? It’s written by a chap—one Giovanni Bresci, who graced this earth during the latter part of the seventeenth century. Isn’t it a curious coincidence that I should be reading it the night you first broached this case?”

I listened intently while Tinkle ran on, afraid to break the abstraction, and thus bring him to himself.

“The Manna of St. Nicholas,” he continued, in a dreamy voice, “was discovered by Tofani, of Naples. Its ingredients are lost to posterity, but by some it is thought to have been composed of crystallized arsenic in water, and some of the herb of cymbalaria. It is absolutely tasteless, incapable of being detected, and four or five drops are sufficient to produce the desired result. Alasco, that old and wily alchemist and astrologer, you may remember, administered it to the Earl of Leicester, and later, to gain a certain powerful control——” Here, metaphorically, I leaped at Tiberius W. Tinkle.

“To gain a certain control,” I echoed, jumping excitedly to my feet. “There you have it, Tinkle! I have it, I have it—at last! You cannot hide it from me any longer. See, it is the marchesa. I knew it, I knew it, and Eunice knew it! This marchesa is Ital-

ian. The secret has been imparted to her by Doctor Marucci. And he has fooled you into thinking he was ignorant of its properties. This horrible poison is being used on Alice Lorme. The evidence is incontrovertible. How did you manage to get hold of it?”

“I found a small quantity of it in a glass from which Miss Alice had drunk. Of course it was greatly diluted.”

“The marchesa,” I said, with compressed lips. “Have you discovered where she keeps the original stock?”

Tinkle shook his head. His abstracted eyes suddenly became riveted on a small oil painting, an offense I had committed in my youthful days, entitled “Girl with Muff.” It was taken from a well-known old master. Tinkle’s eyes became focused on this abomination, and he finally jumped to his feet, humming softly.

“Perhaps Doctor Marucci carries the poison on his person,” I ventured. “Have you thoroughly searched the marchesa’s apartment?”

“Doctor Marucci has nothing to do with the affair,” said my friend somewhat irritably. “I tell you he hasn’t. At least, I can read faces whatever other mistakes I may make. No guilty soul could have withstood that third degree to-night. You see, I admit that the delightful ‘Manna’ accounts for Miss Alice’s anemia. But murder was not intended. There is no better authority on the poison than Alasco himself, and he says: ‘A moderate portion of the drug hath mild affects, no ways ultimately dangerous to the human frame, but which produces depression of spirits, headache, a great unwillingness to change of place—even such a state of temper *as would keep a bird from flying out of a cage were the door left open.*’ Mark well that last statement, Little One. And Miss Alice’s cage was really very pleasant. There you have all the symptoms in the case.”

“It’s terrible how wicked women can be,” I exclaimed, in pious horror.

“Terrible,” agreed Tinkle, somewhat dryly.

I was in a high state of excitement.

"Can we go up to-night?" I urged. "I cannot bear the thought of that young girl being all alone—in that terrible woman's power."

"It's rather late for a call," commented my friend. "Early to-morrow will be soon enough." And he turned to the book he was inspecting.

I slept but little that night. The morning found me keyed to a highly nervous tension. Tinkle was methodically calm and dispassionate.

"But," said he, "I fear you may find it rather exciting. Don't you think you had better remain home?"

"Not a bit of it," I said. "I'll be in at the death, if any one is."

"It will not be very nice to see a woman in such an extremity," he warned. "I wouldn't do it unless I had to."

"It's nice to do anything to some women," I replied, with some vindictiveness.

For some reason Mr. Lorme did not accompany us. In fact, my friend made no sort of preparation, which somewhat disappointed me. I would have welcomed the exposure of the marchesa before the largest audience possible.

"The presence of one member of the family will be quite sufficient," said my friend shortly. "Mr. Lorme is a violent man. Cool heads are required. Your Miss Eunice, I fancy, will fill the bill. Besides, her presence will be quite natural, for she visits her sister each morning."

I secretly gloried in Miss Eunice's capabilities. I could well imagine what her keen mind and tongue could find to say, for I suspected there was not the tenderest of feelings between her and the marchesa. Yes, undoubtedly Tinkle was right. Woman can best deal with woman. Miss Eunice had not yet arrived when we reached the Lodi apartment. The marchesa greeted us quietly, but I saw surprise in her eyes as they rested on me. I gave back look for look with interest.

"And how is the patient this morning?" asked Tinkle cheerfully. Indeed, he carried himself with such great

good-will that I immediately fell in love with his hitherto unsuspected histrionic ability. And our enforced hostess was not far behind in dissembling.

Miss Alice expressed the same profound lassitude and indifference as formerly, and even the arrival of Miss Eunice a little later did not rouse her.

Miss Eunice evinced surprise at seeing me in company with Tinkle, and I imagined the hand she lent me was—well, cordial. Some girls can express so much in a mere hand-clasp. As for me, I thought with pleasure of our return journey, for in lieu of Mr. James I could expect to escort her home.

Miss Eunice fussed a good deal over her chronically indifferent sister in a pretty motherly way that was delightful to witness.

"And there is no change?" she said, with much despondency, turning to Tinkle. "I wonder *what* is the matter."

My friend shook his head. Miss Eunice pursed her short upper lip. Then she leaned over her sister, and by deft cajolery sought to awaken some interest in those lack-luster eyes.

Tinkle, hand in chin, was moodily inspecting both. I was on the qui vive, waiting, waiting for his swift accusation of the marchesa. But he was maddeningly composed.

Presently he spoke, and I could almost have struck him as I realized that he was taking the coward's way; in his inordinate regard for our hostess he was deliberately shielding her from a public charge.

"May I have a word with you in private, Miss Eunice?" he asked quietly. "It is a personal matter."

"Why, yes," said the girl, showing her surprise. "But why not here?"

"Yes, why not here?" I echoed warmly, meeting his eyes. I was not to be entirely balked of my revenge. "We are all interested in the case—and I am sure the Marchesa del Lodi would be an appreciative listener."

"It can be better said in private," said Tinkle hesitatingly. "Do *you* insist upon being present?"

"I do," said I. "I am Mr. Lorme's lawyer."

Tinkle bowed, his lips tightening. "Just as you wish, Boyd. Perhaps it is best."

"My drawing-room is at your disposal," said the marchesa coldly.

Tinkle preceded us and deliberately closed the door.

"I—I hope it's nothing serious," exclaimed Miss Eunice soberly. "You look so frightfully deadly."

"Nothing very serious," replied my very eccentric friend, rocking on his heels, his eyes on hers. "Perhaps a slightly personal and impertinent question. You see, Mr. Boyd and I had a discussion on the various qualities of ermine, I affirming your muff was made from the pure skin; he, that it was of second quality. Oh, yes, you did, Boyd, so please don't interrupt. Remember you are here by request, not permission. May I assure myself on this point, Miss Eunice?"

"What do you mean?" she asked, opening her eyes very wide.

I could only feebly gasp at my friend's eccentric lies, wondering if he had at last gone insane.

"I want to see your muff, Miss Lorme," repeated Tinkle quietly.

The girl laughed. "How absurd! How perfectly absurd! Is this quite the time to decide farcical bets?"

"The muff, please!" Suddenly there had come a ring in Tinkle's voice that I knew of old. His figure was tense, his eyes snapping.

And, as I looked, as things are obfuscated in some ugly dream, I vaguely realized that a very dramatic climax of some sort was being worked up with me for sole audience. I noted Miss Eunice go slowly pale; pale, pale until her cheek matched the ermine at her throat. But her eyes grew dark as a cougar's. Something was happening that I could not, dare not, *must* not analyze. Tinkle's warnings, his careful preparations, that I had hitherto ignored, came to me in a wonderfully ugly light.

"I—I don't understand," said the girl, as if she were suffocating.

"Must you understand — before them?" asked Tinkle, flinging a long arm toward the closed door. "I had thought to save you that."

The girl looked at him, and she must have seen something in his eyes, for she caught her breath. Then, with a supreme effort that started the muscles in her neck to vibrating, she regained command of her femininity.

"You are silly," she said, with cold indifference, "and I cannot understand. But, of course, you can see my muff." She half-turned away as she started to draw the supporting string over her head.

The next thing I knew, Tinkle had her by the arms, pinned from behind, in a savage grip.

I jumped. "Enough of this insane outrage——"

"Take the muff, you fool!" he blazed at me over her shoulder. "Take it, or——"

Like some supple, inexorable steel spring, Miss Eunice had writhed round in his arms. As I stood there impotent, befuddled, Tinkle jerked his arm up under the girl's white throat, throwing back her head sharply. With a sudden snap he tore away the muff and string with his other hand. I saw teeth marks in the hand.

Miss Eunice stood very white, breathing in great sobs. If I ever saw a treed cougar, I saw it then. Her eyes were on the muff.

"Give it to me! Give it to me!" she panted, her eyes wild.

Tinkle, unmoved, was running a nervous hand over the white, rounded surface. Suddenly there came a click; a flap flew back like the lid of a box.

"My private purse," said Miss Eunice, in a whisper. "Surely you will not——" She caught her breath until it whistled. Then down she went on her knees by a lounge, the fight crushed from her, and she was racked with hard, dry sobs terrible to listen to.

And Tinkle stood like some example of arrested motion, a small vial in his uplifted hand.

"Manna of St. Nicholas, of Bari," said he softly.

And "Damn!" said I.

"The 'Girl with Muff,'" said he.

"It's a lie," said I. "A lie." But I knew that it wasn't.

"No," said Tinkle soberly, and with great sincerity, his eyes on the kneeling girl, "it was love—love and jealousy. Shall I tell the motive, Miss Lorme, or shall you?"

The girl rose slowly, the tears in her eyes and voice.

"It was for Mr. James," said Tinkle simply. "He changed his affections from you to your sister, and though she did not care for him, jealousy knows no law. You wished to keep her out of the way until you had won him back. Is it not so?"

"U-m-m," gurgled the girl, and broke down completely.

"I—I think I'll go," said I vaguely, and I left her with Tinkle, who owned a heart for all his cold-blooded science. Another idol had gone crashing.

I inspected the ugly debris of retrospect as I smoked an abysmal pipe by our study-fire. Tinkle entered after a long hour.

"I was a fool," said I, refusing to meet his eyes. "And you suspected Miss—Miss Eunice all the time?"

"No," said Tinkle thoughtfully. "At first I thought she had enlisted the aid of Doctor Marucci. But I never suspected the marchesa—once I had seen her. You see, Little One, *you* were swayed by the influence of a pretty woman—just as you accused me of being. Miss Eunice cleverly directed suspicion toward the marchesa in case anything should be discovered. You must remember that on her mother's side she was a descendant of the Broghlis. She did not intend to kill her half-sister, but merely to keep her in a stupefied condition; to keep her from returning to her father's house and there coming under the attentions of Wallace James. You see, the Broghlis were the principal exponents of Tofani's art. Bresci mentions this fact in his monograph. Strange to say, I was reading about them the very night you first broached this matter."

"But where did you find the mo-

tive? How did you suspect her affair with that cad James?" I asked, mortified. "I was blind."

"I learned a lot from the marchesa," replied Tinkle simply. "She is a very fine woman, Little One, and you misjudged her through prejudice. You'll never go very far if you start with an acute bias. It was all a rather lucky chance shot, all owing to Giovanni Bresci, coincidence, and the 'Girl with Muff.' I knew at once that some insidious drug was being used, and, having come fresh from the subject, my mind at once jumped to the Broghlis, of Naples, and Tofani's lost art. Here, in Alice Lorme, were all the mysterious symptoms. Looking for a motive, the marchesa supplied it. You see, I knew what to look for in regard to the drug, and I readily found a sample of it in the glass. I knew Miss Eunice would have to bring it with her, and puzzling over where it might be concealed, my eye chanced to light on that picture of yours—and, wouldn't a muff be the best place?"

"And how did you wind up the affair?" I asked dully.

"There is no one wholly bad," said Tinkle moodily. "The girl's heritage and passions ran away with her morality. I kept it from her father and sister, but in justice I was compelled to tell the marchesa. In short, Little One, I prescribed marriage with Mr. James. They sail to-morrow morning for Europe. Absence sometimes is a good negative commodity. It smoothes things over."

"And she will not be punished?"

"She married James, I believe. Isn't that punishment enough?" asked Tinkle dryly.

In conclusion of the strange case, I may state that Alice Lorme speedily recovered, and was all that a father could wish to find in a daughter. I hear she is engaged. Strange to say, Mr. Lorme recently married the Marchesa del Lodi. And, stranger to say, Mr. Wallace James and his passionate little wife have not, as yet, evinced any signs of unhappiness.

The Handy Companion

By B. M. Bower

Author of "Rowdy of the 'Cross L,'" "Chip of the 'Flying U,'" Etc.

A realistic little story which begins with a remarkable case of steertaming as the result of a "dare," and ends with an all-night search for a cowboy over wind-swept hills in the teeth of a blizzard



WITH both the Old Man and Chip away from the ranch, the Happy Family were enjoying even greater freedom of speech and action than usual; which is saying a good deal, for never were they subjected to much discipline. The White House was silent and coldly empty. Chip and the Little Doctor were visiting in Ohio, and the Old Man had gone as far as Chicago with them, and was not hurrying to come back. He believed that the ranch would be in its accustomed place when he returned, and there was nothing to do but feed the calves and horses, so that he did not worry much.

The Happy Family, left to their own devices, at first did nothing but rebel systematically against the brief authority of Weary, who had been promoted to the empty honors of foreman. Pink and Irish Mallory, in particular, harassed Weary systematically, and dared him to "can" them—which is, being interpreted, to be discharged. Weary wrestled with the rebels, literally and figuratively, and made threats. But these would have had little effect had not his physical duplicate, Irish Mallory, discovered a new and fascinating occupation.

"I bet yuh dassen't ride that muley steer," Pink bantered him one day when they had finished feeding the hospital bunch. The muley was not properly qualified for admission to the hospital bunch; but he liked the good blue-

joint hay thrown lavishly to the young stock, and he stayed, master of the bunch and the situation, in spite of spasmodic efforts to make him get out and rustle, as did his fellows of the range.

"I call yuh," said Irish confidently. "I'll ride him up to meals and back down to water before the week's over. What d'yuh take me for?"

"I'd kinda hate to say, right out loud," murmured Pink, dimpling at the prospect of a spectacular bit of broncobusting. "I rode a steer one sad day I hate to recall. He ditched me and my saddle in just four seconds by the clock. And I sure lit hard. Let's not talk about it."

Such a confession, coming from Pink, known all over northern Montana as a "bronco-peeler" of parts, carried some weight. Irish leaned against the stable-door and regarded the muley-steer thoughtfully. "Well, I ain't tried it since I was a kid and rode a yearling bull," he remarked musingly, the while he sifted tobacco into a tiny paper trough. "But I'm sure going to tackle it right after dinner. I had that bull calf broke gentle, let me tell yuh. You ask Weary; he'll remember him, all right. I used to ride Spot to the post-office after the mail; he wasn't no meek specimen uh shorthorn, neither. I believe muley'll make a rattling good saddle-animal; he's got the build, don't yuh think?" There was just enough Irish about him—besides his nickname—to make it utterly impossible for him to "take a dare." "He'll come handy

around the ranch—he's so easy caught, and always right under your nose. He ought to make a good traveler."

Pink looked at him, and then at the big, rangy steer butting his way to the choicest heap of hay. Pink's heavy fringe of lashes drooped demurely, and he went up to the bunk-house saying nothing, but with the dimples standing deep in his rounded cheeks.

At dinner he looked down the line of tanned, mischief-loving faces. "Yuh want to roost high this afternoon," he advised, in his soft treble. "Irish is going to do a bronco-busting stunt. He's going to break the muley-steer gentle for a lady to ride. He says he needs him to ride up to the bunk-house and to his meals. He's plumb tired of walking up the hill from the stable."

"Somebody better start for the coroner, by golly!" commented Slim, gulping his coffee hastily. "He can't git here too quick, neither."

"Aw, gwan! Irish ain't had anything to drink for a week," doubted Happy Jack, fearing some joke. "Er if he has, he's kept it mighty quiet. I guess he ain't going to ride no steer—he ain't full enough."

"All right—you ask him." Pink looked the most innocent thing in Chouteau County.

"Are yuh?" Happy demanded suspiciously of Irish.

Irish carefully spread a biscuit with butter and honey. He raised his eyes, blue and sunny, like the eyes of Weary, and looked Happy Jack calmly in the face. "I sure am," he said, in a tone that carried conviction. "And if the coroner comes and sets on me, you can blame Pink. He dared me to."

Pink looked hurt, and reminded Irish that he didn't have to do it if he didn't want to, and Cal Emmett asked pointedly, staring babyishly at every one but Weary, if there wasn't anybody around that was supposed to be boss uh this gang uh funny punchers. Weary remarked that *he* was boss—only they didn't seem to realize it enough to do any good, and he hated to come down on the bunch too hard. He thought they meant all right. Also,

he advised Irish to hobble his stirrups.

They swallowed their dinner more hurriedly than was good for the digestion, and trooped down to the stable in the wake of Irish, stalking vain-gloriously before. Long ago they had learned the slight difference between him and Weary, so that they could, if they took notice and the light was good, tell the two apart at a glance—which is saying a good deal for their powers of observation; Irish and Weary were as like as two men may be, if they have any individuality at all. In fact, it was only in that indefinable something we call personality that the difference lay. Now, as they walked close together—tall, straight, gray-hatted, and brown of hair—the resemblance was startling.

"Say," complained Cal, walking just behind, "yuh ought to wear pink-and-blue ribbon on your shoulders, you two. I don't know, right now, which one of yuh it is we're due to wear crape for."

"I betche it'll pan out the way Almighty Voice done," gloomed Happy Jack. "We like to got canned that time—the hull bunch of us. Yuh better cut out the steer-taming act. Yuh don't ketch *me* in no scrape like that ag'in."

"No, by golly, nor *me*, either!" agreed Slim, waddling, righteously disapproving, in the rear. "I'll set on the table and look on, but yuh needn't to expeck no more uh *me*—nless, maybe, it's to help pick up what's left."

"By the everlasting dogies!" swore Irish, identifying himself by turning so that they could see the reckless blue eyes of him, "you fellows are sure going to a lot uh trouble, mourning around before anybody's laid out. If anybody's due to eat supper with the angels, it's *me*; and I ain't worrying none. Cease thy sad and mournful wailing—and for Heaven's sake, shut up!"

With that rebuke in their ears, they grinned at one another, and went in silence down the hill to the stable.

There Irish, walking nonchalantly, as if the riding of steers was quite an every-day occurrence with him, went alone into the big corral and tied the

gate shut after him. With the Happy Family roosting on top rails and watching pessimistically, he widened the loop of his rope, went slowly across to the mangers, dragging the loop for a "corral throw," cast it neatly over the head of the muley-steer, went up and adjusted a hackamore, and was astride him before the astonished victim gulped his cud and awoke to the exigencies of the situation. Irish suggested movement with his spurs, and the muley began to buck and bawl viciously. The Happy Family forgot its pessimism, grew enthusiastic, and yelled encouragement; Irish was doing well, with his long legs clinging desperately and his spurs digging deep. Then, just when they were praising his sticking qualities, and telling him kindly that a porous plaster wasn't in it with him, he sailed high, and stood on his head in the manger full of hay.

"Better put your saddle on him, Irish," yelled Cal, kicking the rails excitedly.

"And hobble your stirrups," added Weary solicitously. "Mama! do I look like that?"

"By golly, my money's on old muley!" shouted Slim.

"You just keep it there, old-timer, and watch how it fades away," Irish retorted. "And I'll thank the audience not to butt in." He sought diligently for his hat, found it, removed stray wisps of blue-joint from his hair, and went back to the struggle.

That time he stayed longer; the steer's deep bellowing took on a note of great mental distress, so that the whole hospital bunch came hobbling up to tender its sympathy and help. The Happy Family got down from their perch and threw clods of snow at them, to keep them at a distance. In the end, Irish went off quite unexpectedly and emphatically.

By supper-time he was riding a very docile muley-steer round and round the big corral, and teaching it to "neck-rein" like a horse. The Happy Family, a bit disappointed, perhaps, that the incident was closing without casualty, taunted him with his boast to ride the

steer to the mess-house to his meals, and jeered because he stayed inside the corral.

A man's honor is a sensitive plant at times, and the joke grew with Irish to fixed purpose. He would break the steer gentle, and he would ride him to meals, though fractured limbs pay the price. For two days the Happy Family roosted on corral rails, and watched the "busting" progress steadily to tameness that palled. After that their interest flagged a bit—until the fourth day, when Irish appeared promptly at the call of Patsy, and rode the muley proudly up to the very door of the mess-house. He went in, swaggering, and asked the Happy Family, self-consciously, what they thought of his new saddle-horse. The muley nosed greedily among the tin cans and frozen potato-parings at the corner of the cabin.

After supper, Irish mounted muley before the eyes of the Family, and ambled down to the stable, while the Family followed after, and said that anybody could do it if they had more time and nerve than brains. Irish, grinning back at them, cared little for their disparagement; he had won, and they had not. He could afford to let them say things, if it would relieve their feelings any.

The next day, and for many days thereafter, Irish rode the steer from cabins to corrals; down the coulée to the little pasture when there was a fence to be fixed, and to the creek when the water-holes must be opened. In short, Irish absolutely refused to walk when it was possible to ride, and the Happy Family looked on, pained at the blatant triumph of him, and haughty when he boasted openly of the convenient mode of travel. They rechristened the muley-steer. They called him, with much sarcastic inflection, Irish's "Handy Companion." Whereat Irish laughed, and said the name was a good one.

"I ain't reached the limit of the Handy Companion's talents yet," he declared one day at dinner. "He's got a brain that any one uh yuh might be proud of. I can guide him without

anything on his head, like he was an old cow-pony. A slap alongside the neck's just as good as he needs. And he knows 'Whoa' good as Happy does."

"Aw, gwan. Yuh needn't compare me to no blamed steer," scowled Happy Jack.

"He's learnt all I've set before him," Irish went on placidly. "He's got so when Patsy yells 'Grub-pile,' he'll come running up to me to get on, and when I mount, up he comes to the mess-house without no telling. He sure savvies meal-time, the Handy Companion does. But there's more I'm goin' to learn him."

The Happy Family looked interested, but hesitated to question him. Then Weary, setting his cup down gently, smiled blandly at his double.

"Are yuh going to learn him to hunt your overshoes and mittens, and bring yuh hot water every morning to shave with?" he inquired mildly.

"No, sir, I'm going to break him to drive single, so I can take my girl to dances with him."

The Happy Family smiled; to their certain knowledge Irish hadn't any girl.

"I call yuh," Pink spoke up promptly. "I'll bet five dollars yuh don't have the nerve to drive over to the Meeker dance with the Handy Companion. That'll give yuh a week to break him gentle."

"He's gentle as a sheep-herder's faithful dog, right now," said Irish. "And yuh shouldn't throw good money away so foolish, little one. Consider it my five dollars."

Thus it was that the education of the Handy Companion proceeded, even unto disaster. For the next day Irish contented himself with adjusting an old harness to the bony proportions of the Handy Companion, and hitching him to a triangular thing of logs, which the boys called a "go-devil," and which was meant primarily to be used in cleaning irrigating ditches, and not to educate big red steers.

The day following, feeling confident that the Handy Companion was going to be nice about it, Irish, in the face

of Happy Jack's predictions and the warning voice of Slim, hitched the Handy Companion rashly—and solidly—between the shafts of an old buggy, decrepit from long standing in the storms of winter and the fierce heat of summer, settled himself gingerly upon the broken-backed seat, and shouted "Git-ap," with no premonition of coming misfortune.

The Handy Companion started off at a lumbering trot, and the Happy Family cheered from the corral fence.

"Guess I'll drive up and ask my girl if she'll go to the dance with me," grinned Irish over his shoulder.

Weary's schoolma'am had once made a mistake, and had whispered confidences into the ear of Irish—and Irish had not forgotten, or permitted Weary to forget. So it was with mischief in his mind that he headed into the trail that climbed the grade toward Meeker's. He would make Weary believe that he was going straight over to impose his twinlike resemblance upon Weary's schoolma'am, and perhaps cheat the schoolma'am into further mistaken confidences.

"Run right along, and good luck to yuh!" shouted Weary above the rattle of the buggy. "But if yuh don't know the password, your name's Mud. Mama mine! did yuh think I'd leave the way open for yuh to play that trick twice?"

But Irish did not hear. The Handy Companion, realizing suddenly that the abominable rattling which assailed his ears was following close upon his heels, bawled quick dismay, and started to outrun the noise. And, though Irish braced himself and pulled hard upon the lines, he was afraid to pull too hard, fearing the psychological moment when the rotted leather would part. So the Handy Companion scuttled away up the grade, and the Happy Family clung to the corral fence, and roared amusement.

At the Hog's Back the Handy Companion, still running and still bawling, was met unexpectedly by a rig coming down; a hired rig from Dry Lake, with the Old Man driving. The Handy

Companion, with all the obstinacy of his kind, refused to turn out. The affronted team from Dry Lake did not refuse; it insisted upon turning out completely and taking a short cut down the bluff, never before attempted by horses.

The Old Man yelled incoherent things, the general tone of which sounded profane; Irish yelled things that were not incoherent, but were also profane, and were directed at the hornless head of the Handy Companion. Down below, the Happy Family quit laughing and started to the rescue. They knew the Old Man better than did Irish; they foresaw unpleasantness.

They were not mistaken; for it was not an hour later that Irish, looking a bit sobered, was tying up his bed and stuffing things into his war-bag, the while the Happy Family sat disconsolately upon their bunks and rolled cigarettes, which they could not in the least relish, and told Irish to never mind; the Old Man would get over it and send for him again.

"Aw, gwan! not with his shin skun the hull darn length of it," put in Happy Jack. "And not with that hired buggy smashed to kindlin'—which he'll have to dig up the price for."

"That's what. I guess me and the Handy Companion'll have to go, all right enough," Irish agreed, trying to make a joke of it. "We're too swift for this bunch, and that's no lie."

"Why didn't yuh let on like you was Weary?" Jack Bates asked pettishly. "Then, maybe, it'd be all right; the Old Man thinks a lot uh him; he wouldn't dast can Weary, on account uh Chip. Chip wouldn't stand for it, and the Old Man knows it."

"Because—never thought of it, and I wouldn't uh done it if I had. I'm going back to the Rocking R; the foreman there knows how to take a joke. But I sure hate to leave yuh, boys." He gave a last yank to the rope on his bed, and reached for his hat. "I'll be in Dry Lake a couple uh days, likely," he said. "You can haul my bed in, first trip yuh make." They followed him out and down to the stable, where he threw his

saddle upon Banjo. They cast many black looks up at the White House, and called the Old Man bad names; for they hated to see Irish go. As Cal mournfully remarked, it ought to be a State's prison offense to bust up a pair uh twins like Irish and Weary. But Irish went, in deep disgrace for the thing he had done; went, too, the Handy Companion, driven vengefully far back upon the open range.

The vengeance of the Old Man did not stop there. With his shin (as Happy Jack put it) "skun the hull darn length of it," which was painful in the extreme; with the hired rig a wreck beyond hope of repair, and with the indignity of coming down the grade in just the manner in which he had descended, he visited his wrath upon the Happy Family as a whole, and set them to needless and humiliating tasks.

He told Happy Jack and Slim that they could cut up all the wood there was piled by the mess-house door—and it was much. Happy Jack and Slim hated wood-chopping, and they went at it sullenly. Usually an extra man was hired in the fall to chop wood. Cal, Pink, and Jack Bates were put to hauling a lot of old boards and rotted posts away from the barn and corrals—a task out of season and humiliating to any self-respecting cow-puncher. And Weary, because he had been left in charge, perhaps, and it was mete that his punishment should be solitary, the Old Man sent upon a long and unprofitable ride out over the wind-swept hills after a horse that had been lost so long no one ever thought seriously of finding him. And thus began the penance of the Happy Family.

Pink straightened stiffly and laid hand to his aching loins. "If it wasn't that we deserved a bunch a misery, and if it wasn't that the Old Man means all right, and a few other good and sufficient reasons," he sighed, "so help me Josephine, I'd roll my bed and go call for my time!"

"Yeah, so would I." Cal, casting a prudent glance up the hill to see if the Old Man was in sight, leaned wearily

against the stable while he made a cigarette. "But what yuh going to do? He comes down on a fellow like a father, with it-hurts-me-worse-'n-it-does-you——"

"Look over there, and quit mourning," Jack Bates interrupted. "We might as well put these cayuses in the stable and get under cover; she's going to bust loose and blizzard to beat hell in about four seconds."

"Yeah, that's right." Cal pinched out his match hurriedly and went to unhitching the team. Up on the sky-line, at the top of the high ridge, a fine-meshed, dull gray veil seemed poised to drop into the coulée. The wind held its breath and waited, so that the dead air oppressed one ominously. It had been warm—it still was warm. But as Pink turned his head to look, his cheek chilled suddenly, as if pressed close against ice.

Then the blizzard struck. And when they had forced shut the stable-door and pulled their hats low to shield their eyes, they leaned against the wind that howled up the coulée, and burrowed into flourlike snow that half-suffocated them before they reached the shelter of the bunk-house. Slim stuck his nose into the crack of the door where he was holding it open for them, and grinned.

"By golly, she's storming *some!*" he bellowed needlessly.

Pink put his foot on the door-step, then drew it back, and doubled against the wind again.

"Where yuh going?" Cal caught at his coat-sleeve.

"You darn fool, Weary's out in this! I'm going to tell that old devil in the house a few things." Pink bent head again, and fought his way against the gale. At his back, though he did not know it, straggled the rest of the Happy Family—save Weary, who was out there somewhere on the high, bare hills, fighting this white hell of wind and snow and bitter cold.

The Old Man heard what Pink had in mind to say, and sucked composedly at his pipe. The Happy Family, grouped belligerently at the back of Pink, waited for the explosion.

The Old Man shifted his skinned leg to a more comfortable position, took the pipe from his mouth, and looked up at Pink. "Yuh may as well keep your clothes on," he returned quellingly. "Yuh act like Weary was a dogoned sheep-herder, and plumb helpless in a storm. He'll sure be flattered at your opinion of him, don't yuh think?"

The Happy Family, with Pink still at the head, went back down to the bunk-house, feeling a bit foolish. Of course Weary could take care of himself. They hadn't thought of it just in that light before, and settled themselves sheepishly to the comfort of a good fire and the mild amusement of seven-up.

An hour later the door burst open, letting in a swirl of wind and snow. They turned relievedly, thinking it Weary; but the Old Man, white of face, his very attitude showing stress of strong feeling, confronted them accusingly.

"What yuh all setting *here* for?" he bellowed. "Ain't yuh got any gumption at all? Don't yuh ever think uh nobody but yourselves? There's Glory down at the stable with the saddle on and bridle-reins a-dragging—and yuh set here playing cards! Why don't yuh *do* something? Yuh going t' let Weary lay out somewheres on the range and freeze to death?"

While he was yet speaking, frightened into injustice, the Happy Family was getting into chaps and overcoats, and seeking feverishly for caps and mittens. They did not resent the injustice; their faces, too, were white, and they were careful not to look one another in the eyes.

"Where's that whisky-flask?" Pink demanded, his soft tones harshened by fear.

Happy Jack produced it shamefacedly, and Pink, seeing how little there was left, swore venomously. Then, tightening belts and pulling caps lower over ears, they trooped out, silent and businesslike. Without an unnecessary word they saddled their best horses, made sure that every man had gun and cartridges with which to fire signals, and rode away up the grade.

Somewhere out in the white swirl above, a man they loved well was afoot—or worse. They knew Glory of old, and understood just what deviltry he was capable of, and they thought of him savagely with hearts that held horse-murder a good thing.

Without knowing how it had happened, they could easily guess. Glory had refused to cross some washout or climb some steep place in a hill; and Weary had tried to force him into obedience. The result was clear: Glory had started pitching—and not a horse in all that country could pitch as wickedly as could Glory—and he had either fallen or thrown Weary. The Happy Family held to the first solution. Weary might be unhurt, but afoot and lost in the suffocating white wall that stood always just before. Or he might be lying helpless, with the flour-fine snow drifting and drifting—— The Happy Family preferred not to think about that.

At the top of the grade they parted and rode in couples, taking the best they could for the bewildering sweep and eddying swirls of the storm, certain definite routes, with a common meeting-point. Pink, doggedly determined himself to find Weary, carried the whisky-flask. So they fared forth, their forms quickly swallowed in the white, dancing veil of snow.

Two hours, and four of them met at the far side of Antelope Butte. Pink and Cal Emmett, thrashing arms about chilled bodies, their coats covered with snow, rode up and met Slim and Jack Bates rounding a point from the opposite direction.

"Where's Happy?" Cal demanded, peering into the blinding wall.

Jack and Slim did not know. He had been riding with them, and then had declared he heard a shot off to the right; they had not heard it, but immediately after they had missed Happy Jack. He was somewhere around, they said half-heartedly.

"Trying to get lost himself," snapped Pink. "Well, he's got a good horse under him—let him go. Which way shall we ride next?" Pink's voice was hoarse

from much calling into the storm, and his slim figure, shrouded as it was in a heavy coat, looked boyish and pitiful in the wild beat of the blizzard.

Again they parted, and their voices, muffled maddeningly in the snow-smother, went out, seeking answer. The white wall darkened to chill gray as the night came down to balk still further their efforts. Somewhere out here in this bleak stretch of unpeopled range was Weary fighting the wind and the cold and the snow, handicapped terribly, even if he was unhurt, by the loss of Glory. Pink's teeth were shut so tight together, between shoutings, that they ached with the pressure. Long ago he and Cal had taken to shouting alternately, two or three minutes apart, to save their voices. Their long-drawn hellos drifted weirdly away on the wind, and every silence, coming after, seemed to beat upon the heart of them threateningly.

Then, when the riding and the calling, and the cold and snow-beat seemed like to go on forever, Pink's call wrenched a faint answer from out the gray swirl. They spurred their plodding horses to a lope, and hurried to the sound. Two figures met them—one Happy Jack, and humped in the saddle beside him, bundled to the eyes, rode the Old Man.

"See anything of him?" His voice quavered, querulous with anxiety.

"No." Cal brought out the word harshly. It touched him to see the Old Man, still lame from the runaway, riding futilely out there in the blizzard. Evidently he could not bear the inaction of waiting at the ranch, and had followed them. It must have been his shot that Happy Jack heard.

They spoke together hurriedly and separated; and the wind swooped down with the snow, and bore them apart with uncanny swiftness, so that Cal, looking where the others had been but a half-minute before, saw nothing but whirling snow that beat cruelly in his face.

Their feet grew numb in the stirrups, and they got off and led their horses. They grew bewildered as to directions,

and plodded at random, still shouting alternately into the storm. Even so, their voices hoarsened and their throats ached with calling against that bitter wind. A gray shape slid by them, startling them, just at first, with the hope it brought. It was a wolf hurrying home to his den. They went slipping and sliding into coulees they never recognized, still shouting; and hump-backed cattle, huddling under cut-banks for shelter, lowed miserable answer, or lumbered stiffly out of their way when they passed.

Once they came upon a dim figure stooping in the snow, and the blood pounded against their temples. It was Slim, trying to fasten a buckle of his high overshoe. Beyond, just out of sight in the storm, Jack Bates held the bridle of Slim's horse and waited. The reaction from sudden hope was sickening. Pink leaned weakly against his horse, and wondered, in dull anger, at the way his knees shook under him. Cal swore senselessly at the other two from sheer nerve-strain.

Once Pink's foot struck against something soft and yielding, and covered with the all-pervading snow. He gave a sharp cry without ever knowing that he had uttered a sound, and dropped to his knees.

"Weary!" he called pitifully, and scraped frantically at the snow. A storm-weakened calf struggled feebly to rise, and blatted dismally in the very face of Pink. Pink sat down heavily on a rock, and hid his face for a moment in his numb, mittened hands.

Cal, ten feet to the left of him, called out to know what was the matter, and Pink got up and staggered away, still leading his horse. It had grown too cold to ride.

Stumbling stiffly, with the snow now dragging at their knees in places where it had drifted, they came again upon Happy Jack and the Old Man—though they could make the identification sure only by the voices; their eyes told them simply that two gray, wavering shapes of uncertain outline were close, leading two other large shapes, as uncertain of outline as the first.

"If we keep this up," said the Old Man, reluctant but determined, "we'll half of us be lost—or froze. It's no use—we can't find him now before daylight. What we better do is get back to the ranch and warm up, and start out soon as it breaks day with fresh horses."

Though Pink objected, it was inwardly and against his better judgment. He, too, knew it was no use—knew it, and rebelled hotly against the knowledge. He turned sullenly and followed in the trail made by the Old Man and Happy Jack. The Old Man, on account of his lameness, was riding, and he was beating his arms methodically and half-unconsciously about his body.

They still shouted and fired occasional shots, but it was more to call Slim and Jack Bates than with any hope of reaching thereby the ears of Weary. The black gloom of tragedy was fast settling over them; they thought more now of finding Weary's stiffened body and giving it decent burial than of rescuing him alive from the grip of that pitiless storm.

Slim and Jack came suddenly into view, climbing wearily out of a narrow coulee next the one they had just left. They, too, had found nothing. They, too, agreed that it was useless to search farther until daylight. Standing dispiritedly with backs to the wind, and with their horses for scant shelter, they discussed the question of which way was home.

The Old Man settled it by riding ahead and telling them to follow. His old gray, he said, had piloted him home more than once when he had lost the trail himself, and he guessed he'd make good this time. He gave the reins a tentative shake, and then let them lie loose, and the gray, glancing back inquiringly, swung off in a direction not one of the men would have taken, and stepped out briskly.

The Happy Family snuggled into their coat-collars and followed after, and tried not to think of what they might, at that moment, be passing by. Now and then one of them lifted chin and helloed desperately into the storm;

or another would seize his gun, with fingers numb from the cold, and fire hopelessly into the night. Then they would all strain ears to listen, but never came answer save the creeping rush of wind and the faint swish of driving snow.

Flying U Ranch lay silent in the grip of the blizzard. A light shone from the window of the bunk-house, for the last man going out had forgotten to extinguish it. Its yellow glare against the gray night seemed only to accentuate the loneliness. Cal Emmett kicked a stray animal away from the stable-door, and they led their horses in and fed them generously. Then they trooped dispiritedly up the hill to where the light shone, with the Old Man limping painfully behind them. Pink it was who turned back and offered his slim shape for support; the Old Man accepted the help without a word and went on, leaning heavily upon Pink's shoulder.

They hurried into the shelter of the bunk-house, feeling furtive and selfish that they should have the comfort of its warmth while Weary—— The fire still burned in the pot-bellied stove in the center. They grouped around it in silence, and held out their numbed hands to the heat. Slim opened the door of the stove, and half-emptied the coal-hod into its yawning, red mouth. Not one of them thought of anything to say.

Pink came in from helping the Old Man to the house, pulled off his cap and mittens, and threw himself wearily down upon the nearest bed, which happened to be Weary's.

"Oh, mama! get off my leg!" a familiar voice protested, and a brown head raised out of the shadow.

When the Happy Family recovered from the shock and relieved its feeling with much language, Weary, sitting on the edge of his bed with a gray blanket wrapped around him, looked solemnly into the face of the Old Man, who had been summoned by the uproar, and explained in his own fashion.

"Well, the how of my miraculous succor is like this: I was running a

big wolf—it was just before the storm struck us—and I was on the point uh doing myself proud and taking him in, when Glory horse got gay over crossing a washout" ("I told yuh that was it," Happy interrupted), "and took a header down-hill. Never feazed eithee one of us, but he got off and hit the high places for home. Glory just loves to set me afoot away off forty miles from yonder; guess he thinks I need a certain amount uh exercise.

"So I mooched along toward home, with the blizzard at my back. I sure hate to be left out in a storm with nothing left uh my riding-outfit but a forty-foot rope, and I was kinda ruffled in my mind. When the blizzard first come down on me, I went down off the ridge into a coulée that was traveling the same way I was; and first card I turned up was the Handy Companion backed up, all by his lonesome, under a cut-bank. Mama mine! I was sure tickled to meet up with that accomplished critter. I sneaked up and got my rope over his head before he quit being surprised at meeting an acquaintance so far from home, and it took me just half a second to straddle his back and start him for home at a long trot."

He reached for Pink's smoking-material, opened the tobacco-sack mechanically, the while he eyed the Old Man quizzically.

"I sure wish Irish was here," he added significantly. "I'd like to slap him on the back for busting the Handy Companion gentle to ride. It's the most Christian thing he ever done, or will do, if he punches cows till he's a thousand years old." He sighed and licked the finished cigarette into shape. "Mama! I sure do wish he was here."

"Well, go after him, doggone it, if yuh want him so bad," spluttered the Old Man, trying fruitlessly to make his surrender ungracious. "I guess he ain't got no farther'n Dry Lake—nor he won't till this storm let's up. Say! what in thunder did yuh do with the Three H bottle, Slim?"

The Happy Family waited till the door closed behind him, and then drew a long breath of thankfulness.

The Adventures of Felix Boyd

By Scott Campbell

Author of "Below the Dead Line," Etc.

XVI.—THE STOLEN GODDESS

(A Complete Story)



IT'S amazing—astounding! Only the very audacity of the crime could have made it possible. All Paris will be shocked, dazed with horror, unless the truth can be suppressed and the cherished treasure speedily recovered. It is monstrous—appalling! I, even I, my dear Boyd, am unnerved. The Venus de Milo has been stolen!"

Monsieur Maurice Plaquet was very pale and excited. His eyes were twin mirrors of overwhelming consternation and dismay. His desultory phrases were uttered in attenuated whispers, superlatively cautious, thrilling in their intensity, and evincing a state of mind bordering upon suppressed frenzy.

This was Mr. Felix Boyd's introduction to one of the most remarkable cases that ever came under his notice. In company with Jimmie Coleman, his friend of the Central Office, Boyd had sauntered into the Louvre soon after nine o'clock that April morning, at which hour the doors of this famous museum of art are opened to the public.

As frequently may be observed in one of a peculiarly sensitive and impressionable mind, Boyd's remarks to Coleman, as they lingered in the Salle des Cariatides, appeared to lead up to the startling disclosure presently made by Monsieur Plaquet, the young French detective with whom Boyd recently had figured in a case of some impor-

tance. It was as if something in the air, some subtle harbinger of what was coming, had turned Boyd's thoughts in this direction.

"Along parallel lines, Jimmie, that's about the way of it," he was saying. "The better the police service, the greater the cunning and ingenuity displayed by criminals. The one acts like a spur upon the other, so to speak, and the result is a constant neck-and-neck race between them, Jimmie, with only the flip of a coin for choice of the winner."

"There's more truth than poetry in that," Coleman assented, with habitual grimness. "It's a dead even gamble, Felix, for a fact."

"Here in Paris, Jimmie, we find a police service superior to any in the world," Boyd thoughtfully continued. "Yet here, too, the police records present an unparalleled variety of crimes, some of which were absolutely fantastic in their conception and execution. They stand as ugly monuments to the superior ingenuity and rascally cunning of the perpetrators."

"That's right, too."

"There are crimes committed in Paris that would not be dreamed of in any other city in the world. The public never hears of half of them. Even the restless journals of the boulevards are either kept in ignorance of the facts, or peremptorily silenced by the police. Volumes of unwritten history along these lines might be found in the secret archives of the—by the way, Jimmie, notice that man over yonder,

the fellow in an astrakhan coat. Curious-looking chap, isn't he? He was pointed out to me at the Luxembourg yesterday."

Coleman stared askance at him, the one other man among the few early visitors then in that gallery. He was wrapped in contemplation of a colossal piece of decorative statuary—and wrapped in a voluminous astrakhan coat reaching nearly to his ankles, despite that the month was April. He was a gross, red, heavily bearded man, shockingly corpulent, yet low of stature—a squatly, repulsive figure that had absolutely no right to be in so unbecoming a coat.

"Too much Johnson," Coleman dryly growled under his breath. "Who the devil is he?"

Boyd glanced furtively around before he answered, much as if he expected to see in some part of the gallery, or through one of the open doors, something worthy of his interest. That he failed to do so brought an odd, momentary gleam into his eyes, an expression unnoticed by his companion.

"Herr Ludwig is his name, Jimmie," he murmured indifferently. "An art connoisseur, I was told."

"I reckon it's the dippy-house for him who told you."

"I'm inclined to think he was right," smiled Boyd.

"Who'd ever guess it?"

"I judge that he's a Hungarian. I saw him admiring a painting in the Luxembourg yesterday morning—ah, he is going."

Herr Ludwig had come out of his seeming trance and was moving on, walking with a lurch and roll like that of a drunken sailor on a pitching deck. Presently he disappeared around a turn of the gallery.

It was five minutes later, when rounding the same turn, that the young French detective was seen hurriedly approaching, and Coleman quietly exclaimed:

"By Jove! the face of Plaquet indicates that one of your fantastic crimes has been discovered. There must be

something doing, Felix, or he'd not look like that."

"What has occurred, Maurice?" inquired Boyd, as the other approached.

It was then that Monsieur Plaquet declared himself in confidential whispers, as already noted, and made the astounding disclosure that one of the chief treasures of the Louvre, one of the noblest creations handed down by ancient Greek art, one of the proud possessions of Paris, and a model worshiped by every art student in the world—the Venus de Milo had been stolen!

"Stolen—the Venus de Milo!" gasped Boyd, staring at him. "You don't really mean that!"

"Hush!" Plaquet silenced him. "Not so loud, my dear Boyd. The truth must be suppressed. The public must not know—not yet! The treasure must be recovered, or Paris will go mad. Visitors are being excluded from the salon from which it was stolen—see for yourself. The conservator of the Louvre is there, half-crazed. Monsieur Thibeu, the prefect of police, is there. He is questioning the workmen. Not too loud, my dear Boyd, and betray no excitement."

Boyd glanced in the direction indicated. Several groups of visitors were reluctantly retracing their steps to other parts of the gallery, after having been refused admission into the salon of the Venus de Milo. Boyd observed that Herr Ludwig was among them, audibly bemoaning the restriction imposed. There were remarks about repairs being made, that portions of the floor were being renewed, and that the salon must be temporarily closed to the public.

"The device of Monsieur Thibeu," whispered Plaquet, in an explanatory way. "Some reason must be given. The truth must not leak out at present, not before we have done our utmost to trace and recover the lost treasure. This priceless Venus——"

"Bosh!" muttered Coleman, with a growl. "I've heard it cost only a petty twelve hundred dollars. We have millionaires at home who pay a thousand times that for——"

"Cost—pay!" Plaquet desperately whispered. "Man alive, are you mad? Money could not have bought the Venus de Milo. It has no price. It is the pride of the French people. It is the admiration of every visitor to Paris, the adored of every art student in Europe. Do you hear him, my dear Boyd? *Mon Dieu!* do you hear him?"

The suppressed frenzy of Plaquet over the Central Office man's characteristic view of the matter would have appeared ludicrous under less serious circumstances. Though he heard what was said, Boyd's gaze was lingering absently on the man in the astrakhan coat, who was departing, as if averse to complying with the restriction imposed, though other visitors were yielding graciously to the polite requests of several of the museum attendants in uniform.

"I think you spoke of workmen," Boyd lightly remarked, reverting to Plaquet. "If the closing of the salon is only a subterfuge of Monsieur Thibeu, to what workmen did you refer?"

"There are workmen there," Plaquet quietly explained. "The floor has been undergoing repairs since yesterday morning. On Mondays, as you know, the Louvre is closed for cleaning, and the opportunity was taken to repair some of the inlaid work of the marble floor in the salon of the Venus de Milo."

"Ah, I see," murmured Boyd.

"Four of the workmen now are there, hurriedly summoned by the prefect of police, whom the Louvre conservator has begged to investigate the affair in person. The fifth, Jules Ferrol, is at home in a fit."

"In a fit?"

"Yes."

"One of the workmen?"

"Yes, yes, to be sure," Plaquet impatiently nodded. "He was seized with it yesterday while at work—a horrible sight, the attendants say. He was twisted out of shape and frothed at the mouth like a mad dog. He was taken out by his friends, the workmen, and conveyed home in a wagon."

"What time did that occur?"

"Late in the afternoon, just before closing."

"And when was the robbery discovered?"

"Not until this morning."

"Who saw Ferrol in a fit?"

"His fellow workmen, also two of the attendants in this wing."

"Did the attendants see him carried out?"

"I infer so."

"Did anybody else see him?"

"The gendarmes at the outer door saw him."

"Did the attendants afterward see the statue now said to have been stolen?"

Plaquet shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, I know what you think, my dear Boyd," he replied. "We also have thought of that. It is, however, impossible. Yet Monsieur Thibeu now is interrogating the workmen and the attendants who——"

"Do you think that Monsieur Thibeu would object to my presence?"

"Quite the contrary, I'm sure," said Plaquet. "He thinks very highly of your judgment, and knows you may be trusted. Besides, my dear Boyd, you might possibly see some way by which you can serve us."

The eyes of Mr. Felix Boyd gleamed a little brighter under his drooping lids.

"Yes, possibly," he drawled a bit dryly; then pointedly added: "Suppose that I do see some way by which I can serve you? Is it your wish that I should do so?"

Plaquet gasped and threw up his hands. "Can you ask such a question?"

"Take us into the salon," directed Boyd.

Monsieur Thibeu, gray and dignified, smiled faintly when the three men entered, and signified with a slight nod that he approved of what Plaquet had done. He did not, however, discontinue his rapid fire of searching questions addressed to the half-dozen men lined up before him.

While he listened, Boyd glanced gravely about the room. In the middle of it stood a vacant pedestal, that on

which the stolen statue had been posed, a mute rebuke of the outrage committed. The inlaid marble floor showed signs of recent repairs. Several large pieces of light duck, or canvas, were spread in places, on which stood two wooden pails containing cement and trowels, while some mason's tools, some broken bits of marble, and several pairs of overalls were lying near-by.

Two of the men undergoing Monsieur Thibeu's fusillade of questions were the regular attendants in that wing of the Louvre. The other four were men who had been at work repairing the floor during the previous day, all stalwart fellows, and, as far as one could judge, intelligent and honest.

The story told by these six men, for the truth of which all of them vouched, was not particularly remarkable. Coincidental with the stealing of the *Venus de Milo*, however, it became extraordinary.

It appears that one Jules Ferrol, a fifth workman employed there the previous day, had fallen in a violent fit late in the afternoon. Both attendants testified to having seen him in convulsions on the floor, and to the fact that he presented a hideous picture. One of the workmen, Jean Coudert, who was well acquainted with Ferrol and knew him to be subject to such attacks, at once had declared that he must be taken home without delay. One attendant was immediately sent to bring a conveyance to the nearest exit from the Louvre, and he luckily found a covered wagon near-by that served the purpose.

Meantime, in order that the repulsive condition of Ferrol should not be seen by any persons encountered, one of the pieces of duck, then lying on the floor, was thrown over him, and he was taken up by his fellow workmen and hurriedly borne to the waiting wagon. In this he was quickly placed and driven away, with Coudert and another workman also going to take care of him.

The attendant who had assisted in removing the stricken man testified to the truth of all this, and also that he had hurriedly stated the circumstances

to the gendarmes at the door the previous day, who at once had allowed the workmen to take out their burden, despite that it was entirely covered, they having no reason to doubt the attendant's veracity, nor to suspect the workmen of any felonious design.

The same attendant also testified that he had returned to the salon a little later, and had seen the *Venus* in its customary place. This also was vouched for by the two workmen who had remained behind, and who now claimed to have returned to the room after some of their tools.

These somewhat exciting incidents had occurred late Monday afternoon, only a few minutes before the hour for closing the Louvre; and, if true, despite the remarkable coincidence that was obvious, they left only one rational inference—that the theft of the *Venus de Milo* had been subsequently committed, during Monday night or early Tuesday morning.

Mr. Felix Boyd appeared to have no deep interest in those portions of the testimony which he had arrived in time to hear. He hardly glanced at the attendants or the workmen; and when, at the end of half an hour, the prefect sent Plaquet on a mission to the house of Jules Ferrol, Boyd glanced at Coleman and indifferently remarked:

"We'll not remain longer, Jimmie, I think. You may, Monsieur Thibeu, depend upon our discretion."

Then he bowed gravely, and followed Plaquet from the salon.

II.

Though Jimmie Coleman surmised it, Monsieur Plaquet did not—that Mr. Felix Boyd had a design in so abruptly leaving the scene of the inquiry conducted by the prefect of police. It became apparent to the other when they left the Louvre and emerged into the Rue de Rivoli, however, for Boyd then remarked, with brows raised inquiringly:

"Possibly you will not object, Plaquet, to my going with you to the home of Jules Ferrol."

Plaquet looked sharply at him, saying quickly:

"You suspect something?"

"I know something."

"So soon, eh! You know what?"

Boyd smiled in his unfathomable fashion, and shook his head.

"Not yet, my dear Plaquet," said he. "I know only that the Venus de Milo has been stolen, and that I feel a growing interest in the case. If you object to my going with you——"

"*Sacré!*" cried Plaquet, interrupting. "There is no if to it. Come along."

"At this particular stage of the game, Jimmie, two may be a disadvantage," Boyd lingered to remark, with a significant stare at the Central Office man. "I'll rejoin you at our hotel in time for lunch."

"It's all one to me," Coleman indifferently nodded. "See you later, Plaquet."

"The sooner the better. Au revoir, Jimmie."

"I suppose, Plaquet, that you are informed of all that Monsieur Thibeau has learned of the case up to this time," said Boyd, as they locked arms and moved on.

"Yes, yes, perfectly."

"His questions indicated to me that he suspects that the Venus de Milo, not Ferrol, was taken out of the house by the several workmen."

"Who would not suspect that, indeed? Yet that is impossible."

"Monsieur Thibeau is a clever man?"

"Very."

"Why has he not asked who saw Ferrol leave the Louvre after the time he is said to have fallen in a fit? There were five workmen, then, in the salon. If the Venus was taken out under cover of the sheet of duck, as Monsieur Thibeau appears inclined to suspect, what became of the fifth workman—in other words, Jules Ferrol?"

"Oh, but it was Ferrol, not the Venus," cried Plaquet confidently. "Your reasoning, my dear Boyd, can bring you only to my own conclusions."

"You are so sure, eh?"

"Ferrol was not afterward seen to leave the Louvre," said Plaquet. "I

have convincing evidence that he did not leave it, except as alleged. I know the distance to his house, the time naturally required for such a wagon to traverse it, and I have questioned the driver and the neighbors opposite the house of Ferrol, who saw him taken from the wagon and carried in. The distance is a mile; the difference in time between his leaving the Louvre and his arrival home was exactly eleven minutes. I established the time by the testimony of the gendarmes at the Louvre, and that of several neighbors who saw Ferrol arrive home. Since all of these people could not be mistaken and would not lie, it is presumable that we are right."

Boyd heard him with a smile, one only vaguely indicating that he, then, was aiming only to evoke a statement of all the absolute facts thus far established, that he might make his own analysis of the case in accord with them.

"Quite true," he lightly remarked. "You reason that Ferrol, if not in the wagon, could not possibly have made his way from the Louvre unseen and reached home in eleven minutes."

"Certainly. Besides, the neighbors saw Ferrol taken from the wagon."

"Has the driver of it been seen and questioned?"

"Yes."

"What does he say?"

"He tells the same story. Ferrol was in a fit. Delande drove straight to the house and helped carry him in."

"Delande is the driver's name?"

"Yes."

"What is his business?"

"He deals in rags and junk."

"A vocation that ordinarily would not have taken him near the Louvre," observed Boyd.

"Yes," muttered Plaquet, nodding. "We have thought of that. He states that it was only by chance that he was passing the Louvre at that hour with his covered wagon."

"Has he been arrested?"

"No. Yet, *sub rosa*, he is under constant surveillance."

"The gendarmes at the Louvre door,"

said Boyd—"did they detect nothing suspicious about the burden brought out by the workmen?"

"Suspicious—no!" exclaimed Plaquet. "An arrest would instantly have followed. The word of the attendants was enough. The workmen passed out quickly with their burden. One gendarme says he saw, protruding beyond the edge of the cloth, the stiff crown of the black hat worn by Ferrol. Was not that enough, eh? Must it not have been Ferrol, eh? Could you think of the Venus de Milo with a stiff black hat on her classical head?"

Boyd laughed softly.

"It would require a considerable stretch of one's imagination, Plaquet, for a fact," he rejoined. "This Ferrol—he is still in the fit, I think you said."

"He was when I saw him two hours ago."

"You are going there now to learn his condition?"

"Yes."

"You are known to be of the police?"

"Yes, to be sure. My questions enraged his haggard mother."

"Ah, Mrs. Ferrol resented any suspicions cast upon her son, eh?" smiled Boyd.

"It so appeared."

"Yet you did not tell her of the stolen goddess, I infer."

"No, no, nor must you," cautioned Plaquet.

"You may rely upon my discretion," said Boyd. "About these several workmen, Plaquet. Are they known to be men of good character?"

"So far as we have learned."

"Will they be arrested?"

"Not at present, I think. Their silence, however, will be insured."

"I judge so," nodded Boyd carelessly. "Assuming them to be innocent, Plaquet, can there be any trap in that floor now under repairs, by which the Venus could have been removed during the night?"

"No, no, impossible! Absurd!"

"Has any search been made for other evidence pointing to an explanation of the crime?"

"Indeed, yes! A score of our detectives are seeking for it."

"The evidence must be found elsewhere, Plaquet, if you are right about Ferrol," observed Boyd. "You may say that I am a physician employed to look into his case, if any explanation of my presence is necessary. I may, in fact, wish to study the man quite closely."

Plaquet glanced again into Boyd's gray eyes, but he could find in them no sign of encouragement. He said more gravely:

"You'll have an opportunity. We are nearly there. It is this way."

Their rapid walk had brought them to one of the lower precincts of the city, where the ancient buildings were running to the bad, where crowded tenements abounded, and narrow courts and devious alleys formed a labyrinth wisely avoided by night. Here the population was of the lower classes, with a percentage of the disreputable.

Plaquet had entered one of these courts, a narrow way flanked on either side with inferior wooden dwellings, through the miserable vista of which could be seen in the near distance a bit of the sunlit Seine, the only bright spot in a gloomy picture.

Plaquet halted at the doorway of a low dwelling, the walls of which and the rise of the steps were close upon the narrow sidewalk. A faded block of wooden houses stood opposite, at the soiled windows of which the faces of women and children could be seen, reflecting a morbid curiosity concerning the man in a fit living opposite.

"It was here the wagon stopped," Plaquet hurriedly muttered. "This is Ferrol's door. I have questioned those people opposite, who saw him removed from the wagon and carried in. None can doubt them."

Boyd was bestowing a vacant stare at the wall of the house, at the two curtained windows of a room on the second floor.

"The two workmen who came with him carried him in, I infer," he absently replied.

"The driver and one of the work-

men," corrected Plaquet, whose inquiries had been exhausted. "The other workmen remained in the wagon to help lift him out. We'll enter without ceremony."

He did not observe the curious curl of Felix Boyd's thin lips as he mounted the worn wooden steps. He led the way into a narrow entry and up a flight of bare stairs, then into a rear kitchen adjoining a bedroom in front, with an open door between them. A kettle was boiling on the stove, emitting an unsavory odor of cooking, and the scene was far from inviting.

As the two men entered from the hall, a slovenly old woman came hurrying from the front room, her gray locks hanging in disorder over her seared brow, her toothless jaw nervously twitching, and her lips constantly in motion—that unconscious motion of the lips quite frequently observed in aged persons having something on the mind.

In this woman's bleared blue eyes, moreover, there was a look of apprehension which Boyd was quick to notice; and here his keen discernment and rare detective instinct, his superiority in these respects over his companion, came into play. He had seen nothing in front of the house for the woman to have feared, and he turned indifferently and laid his hand on a table near the back window, out of which at the same time he furtively glanced.

A man was just departing through a back alley—a tall, gaunt, scraggly whiskered fellow of forty—moving with a haste quite plainly indicating that he had seen the approach of Boyd and his companion, and had hurried out through a rear door, finding it impossible to depart unseen by that in front. Boyd had seen this man once before, yet none would have thought that he saw him now or had any interest in him.

"How now, Madame Ferrol?" Plaquet meantime was crying. "How is your son progressing? Does he speak, eh? Has he moved yet? Any signs, eh?"

The aged hag, for that she truly appeared, beat her breast and glared at

him with flaming eyes, croaking in accents of mockery that would have been grotesque had it been less pitiable.

"Speak, eh? Moved, eh? Signs, eh?" she cried, punctuating each taunting query with a fierce forward thrust of her unkempt head. "Do you come here again to torment me, you Plaquet? Did I not tell you, miserable, that he would lie three days as you saw him? Do I not——?"

"There, there, Madame Ferrol, hold your tongue."

"Do I not know when he will be well again? Have I not seen him so, you Plaquet, since he was——"

"Peace, woman, or the devil seize you!" interrupted Plaquet, with a mingled growl and laugh. "Are you one huge ingrate, that you resent a kindness I would do you? I have brought you a good doctor to see your stricken son. Here you, my dear Boyd, and have a look at Monsieur Ferrol. As I've told you, my dear doctor, he is in a bad way."

The change in Plaquet, with the announcement he had made, aptly adopting the suggestion Boyd had given him, wrought an immediate change in the woman, indicating that within the heart, seared deep by time, the maternal love still burned warm and tender.

She turned and stared at Boyd with softer eyes, in which hope and hopelessness battled for expression; and even while she gazed he saw again that mute moving of her aged lips, as of one whose mind bears a burden which that of the heart fails to entirely obscure.

"You can do nothing for him," she finally croaked.

"I might try, at least, my good woman," Boyd kindly rejoined. "You will allow me to see him, I'm sure."

"Other doctors have seen him."

"Then no harm can come of my doing so, Madame Ferrol," smiled Boyd, with a bow, as he passed her and followed Plaquet into the front room.

The shades were only partly drawn—as Boyd had noticed from the street. Trust him to have noticed whether one at either window might have seen the approach of Monsieur Plaquet.

On a narrow bed near the wall was stretched the stricken man, a sturdy fellow of forty, with shaven face now as white and composed as if in death, and with his open eyes fixed with a sightless stare at the begrimed ceiling.

Plaquet dropped into a chair near the head of the bed, on the edge of which Boyd gently seated himself, and passed his hand around Ferrol's cold wrist.

"Catalepsy, Plaquet," he said quietly. "It is a sort of apoplectic seizure, inducing the conditions you see here. Though I have made a study of the disease, of which but little really is known because of its rareness, I think I never have seen so pronounced a case. Ordinarily the attack may last from a few minutes to as many days, and consciousness usually returns as abruptly as it is lost. A noteworthy case, indeed."

Boyd addressed these remarks to Plaquet, speaking in ordinary tones, and with the air of a medical expert, all the while retaining the wrist of Ferrol in his hand. Yet the eyes of Mr. Felix Boyd were turned most of the time, with a furtive gaze to which even Plaquet was oblivious, upon the face of the woman who had followed them into the room.

With a hopeless wringing of her hands, Madame Ferrol was passing to and fro between the kitchen door and the foot of the bed, a picture of impoverished old age and maternal distress. Plainly enough she was listening, and had heard all that Boyd said; yet, too, her wagging head evinced a train of thought of her own, and her lips were moving mutely, as before.

Presently Felix Boyd broke her train of thought.

"I judge, Madame Ferrol," he said, "that your son is subject to these attacks periodically."

The woman halted and looked at him, saying simply:

"Yes, monsieur."

"Since he was a child?"

"Since he was a young man, monsieur."

"Do they occur frequently?"

"Three each year, monsieur."

"Ah, they are periodical," remarked Boyd. "I judge that they occur at regular intervals, Madame Ferrol?"

"Alas, yes!" groaned the woman. "Four months to a day, monsieur. He can tell, poor Jules, the very day they should come—and do come, alas!"

"The attack lasts about three days, Madame Ferrol, I think you said."

"Yes, monsieur. He then will be well again. I said so to you—you Plaquet. Why do you come here, eh?"

She wheeled around and returned to the kitchen. Still sitting on the edge of the bed, Boyd could see her over the stove, now at the table, again at the stove, in resumption of her domestic work—and, too, he could see that her mind was again absorbed, and that her lips were mutely moving.

"What do you think?" inquired Plaquet, meantime.

"About what?" said Boyd, with curious indifference.

"This man?"

"What should I think?"

"Is he feigning?"

"No, impossible! The man is in a state of catalepsy. The woman has told you the truth about his disease."

"You think so, eh?"

"I do."

"So do I. Shall we go?"

"Not yet."

Plaquet wondered and waited, then questioned again, and their quiet intercourse was continued for ten minutes. Still Boyd did not stir from his seat on the bed, and Plaquet asked again:

"Shall we go? Are you ready?"

"Not yet," murmured Boyd. "I first wish to see if I can detect any symptom of—ah, is some one coming?"

A vehicle had stopped outside, and a man's heavy tread presently sounded on the bare stairs of the adjoining entry.

Boyd quietly arose and glanced from the window. The enclosed service wagon of an undertaker stood in the court. On the side of the wagon was a metal plate bearing the name—Paul Canole.

Boyd read it, resumed his seat, and took the stricken man's wrist again. At

the same moment a hearty voice sounded through the miserable rooms.

"How now, aunt? I have heard that Jules is in another of his fits. I was driving by, and have come in to learn."

"Alas, yes!" Madame Ferrol replied, with a groan. "He was taken yesterday. No, no, don't go in there, good Paul. A doctor is there, and one Plaquet, of the police. God only knows for what!"

Boyd observed that Paul Canole drew back, and decided not to enter the front room. Like his cousin on the bed, he was a sturdy, well-built fellow, and he remained for several minutes talking in subdued tones to the woman in the kitchen. As well as one could then have judged, their talk was entirely about the sick man, and Paul Canole finally departed and drove away.

Plaquet gazed at the inscrutable face of his companion, wondering.

"Are you ready? Shall we go?" he repeated.

"Not yet—not quite yet."

For two more minutes Mr. Felix Boyd sat motionless on the edge of the bed, apparently absorbed in thought, with his hand still holding Ferrol's white wrist, while his eyes were turned with a vacant stare toward the kitchen and at the woman again at work about the stove.

At the end of the two minutes Boyd decided that he had discovered a curious fact—that the woman's train of thought had been permanently broken.

Her lips had ceased moving.

"We will go, Plaquet," said he, rising indifferently. "This man is like one dead. There is, as you see, nothing to be learned here."

It would have required the experience of Jimmie Coleman to have detected the subtle significance with which this was said.

It was nearly one o'clock when the two men approached the Hôtel de Calais, at the door of which Felix Boyd halted.

"You twice have asked me what I make of this case, Plaquet, and I have not yet informed you," he observed,

with a rather quizzical light in the depths of his keen gray eyes.

Plaquet shrugged his shoulders and vented an odd little laugh.

"Hey!" he lightly exclaimed. "Do you think you need to tell me that, my dear Boyd?"

"I will tell you what I think," smiled Boyd. "This curious mystery admits of only two solutions. Either the Venus de Milo was stolen during last night, presumably by treacherous attendants who devised some way to secretly remove the statue from the Louvre; or——"

"Well?"

"Or it was removed by the workmen who now claim to have carried out Jules Ferrol in a fit."

"Once more—well?"

Plaquet's eyes were vainly searching the depths of those that were looking into his.

"You do not know which is the correct solution, eh?" murmured Boyd.

"I do not, indeed. Do you?"

Boyd laid his hand on his companion's arm, and his voice took on a low, peculiar ring that few could have resisted.

"What I now say to you, Plaquet, I shall say in strict confidence. It must not be mentioned, not suggested by hint or look, before to-morrow."

"Trust me, Boyd, it shall not."

Boyd's eyes burned brighter.

"Then meet me here at nine this evening," he whispered sharply. "It will be well if you come in disguise, Plaquet, and wise if you have a gun in your hip pocket. I then will take you where you may learn what I now know, Plaquet, and where you may lay your hands on the Venus de Milo!"

Plaquet impulsively reached out to insist upon more—but Mr. Felix Boyd, with a refusal in his eyes, swung sharply around and hurried into the hotel.

III.

From the pulsing heart of Paris, ceaselessly throbbing with life, to the serene repose of its rural environment is only a step. It is well that one weary

of the maelstrom may so quickly reach a realm of quietude and rest.

In contrast with the life and light within, the open country beyond the grim fortifications appeared dark at ten o'clock that night, under the light of the stars only, an obscure scene against which the road to Versailles stretched away like a yellow bar on a field of purple.

The gendarmes at the gate appeared oblivious to the presence of the three men who were loitering scarce within speaking-distance, yet who kept for the most part within the gloom and shadows afforded by the adjoining walls. It was close upon ten o'clock when Plaquet asked the hour, and Mr. Felix Boyd informed him.

"There'll soon be something doing, then," the Central Office man growled under his breath, yet in accents of grim satisfaction.

"Assuming that Boyd is right," qualified Plaquet.

Coleman peered at him rather contemptuously through the semidarkness.

"Right, eh?" he said, with quiet significance. "Want to gamble against it, Plaquet? I'll take the other end."

Plaquet chuckled softly and shook his head.

"Better not," added Coleman dryly. "I'd get your dust. You do not know Boyd as I know him. He works in the dark, like a rat, and keeps those in the dark who watch him. Never doubt the sharpness of his teeth, however."

"What time now, my dear Boyd? How soon may we expect——"

"Hist! Here where it's darker, Jimmie. Close to the wall, Plaquet."

The interruption had come from Felix Boyd. While the others were quietly talking, he had been standing as motionless as a figure of bronze in the darkness, apparently oblivious to the complimentary remarks of his loyal friend, and with his frowning eyes gazing out over the yellow highway that stretches away to Versailles.

With the interruption, however, he seized each of his companions by the arm, drawing both hurriedly from the

road and into the deeper gloom under the fortification walls.

"What now?" whispered Plaquet excitedly.

Boyd's thin, clean-cut face looked white in the darkness. His lips were drawn, his brows knit, his eyes aglow with a light all their own. Despite his rigid self-control, a trained hound in leash was never more impatient.

"Listen!" he muttered. "That sound is significant."

"The song of those men?"

"Yes."

"What can that signify?"

"That our quarry is coming. Those fellows may have been sent to divert the attention—wait here, both of you! Don't stir until I return!"

Two men with their arms interlocked, boisterously singing and apparently much intoxicated, were reeling along the highway toward the city and the gate through which they must pass. They still were a hundred yards away, dimly visible in the starlight, and were making night hideous with their ribald song.

Felix Boyd had darted away from his companions, gliding swiftly through the gloom near the wall, only to suddenly appear like a shadow at the elbow of one of the three gendarmes just within the *Porte de Versailles*.

"Listen!" he quietly commanded. "Detain those two men who are singing. I suspect they may have been sent to divert your attention and give you trouble, in the hope that the wagon will be allowed to pass out unchallenged. Let it do so, in case men and wagon arrive here together, indicating that I am right. Leave me to hold up the wagon. You make sure, however, that you hold the singing men."

A nod from one of the gendarmes, with fingers respectfully raised to his cap, was the answer; but Felix Boyd had glided away the moment his last word was said.

Ten seconds later he rejoined his companions, coming as quickly and silently as he had departed. The singing men still were fifty yards away. Their vociferous song had increased in

volume while they approached. Reeling along the middle of the highway, oblivious to the eyes watching them, to the figures crouching in the gloom scarce twenty yards distant, they presently passed beyond the break of the wall and were lost to view.

"Quiet!" hissed Boyd. "Not a sound—not a move!"

Yet now there came from within the gate the sounds of an altercation. The singing had ceased, and the voices of the singers were being loudly raised in protest. One would have said that the two drunken men were resisting an arrest by the gendarmes, for in addition to cries and protests, there now were sounds of a hand-to-hand struggle.

In the very midst of the *mêlée* then in progress Felix Boyd suddenly heard the rapid clatter of hoofs and the rumbling of wheels of an approaching wagon, one about to leave the city. Instantly the light in his eyes became a fiery gleam. He loosed his grip on the arms of his companions, crying quickly, with indescribable intensity:

"I am right! Wait the word from me, both of you. You to the horse's head, Jimmie. You, Plaquet, to the back of the wagon. Down any man who attempts flight. Leave the driver to me. Ten thousand dollars to as many cents, Jimmie, he will be—Paul Canole!"

No verbal description could adequately depict the aspect, voice, and sentiments of Felix Boyd in such moments as these. As if to corroborate his last words, uttered in whispers that cut the night air like the sweep of a rapier, the clatter of hoofs suddenly fell sharply on the road outside of the grim walls, a bay horse came quickly into view, then the closed service wagon of an undertaker—and the voice of Felix Boyd acted like spurs in the sides of his excited companions.

"Now, Jimmie!" he cried. "At him—all together!"

They were in the road in an instant, all three, and Coleman jerked the animal's head to his flank when he grasped the bits and forced him back to his haunches.

"Hold up, gentlemen!" cried Boyd, with a foot on the wagon-step. "Where go you at this hour? You appear in haste."

The eyes of Canole—startled and affrighted eyes—peered down at him from under the hood above the seat. The ruddy hue had vanished from his cheeks, and a man seated on a long, deal-board box behind him slunk out of view.

"Why do you stop me, officer?" gasped Canole. "I am on business——"

"Your name, citizen!" Boyd sharply interrupted. "What is your name?"

"Henri Devrol, officer. I am——"

"Why is it not on your wagon, my man? I see that the metal plate has been lately removed."

"It is being repaired, relettered, officer. You may see it at——"

"Let me, instead, see what you carry."

Canole thrust out both hands in protest, when Boyd attempted to mount to the seat.

"For your life, officer!" he cried appealingly. "We remove a corpse for burial—a death of malignant small-pox! The burial must be at night and out of the city. For your own sake, officer——"

"Smallpox, eh?" cried Boyd, with a loud, derisive laugh. "Never mind—I've had it! I'll see for myself, Canole, not Devrol, and——"

The derisive laugh, the mention of his name, the repeated attempt of Boyd to mount to the seat—these seemed to act like some swift and frightful stimulant upon the man addressed. With a half-smothered shriek, that of a man who has played a desperate game and knows it is lost, a man then bent only upon escape, Canole dropped his reins and launched himself at Boyd to hurl him out of his way.

The latter met him half-way, and they came down in the road together, each upon his feet. Then the hand of Felix Boyd quickly rose and fell, and the thud of a blow with a weapon followed its fall. Canole uttered only a single groan and dropped flat in the road.

There were sounds of breaking doors at the back of the motionless wagon, then a struggle, and the voice of Plaquet calling for aid.

Boyd ran to his assistance, just as two of the gendarmes approached through the gate. Canole's companion had tried to escape—and failed; for in half a minute the man was in irons, one whom Boyd had seen that morning at the Louvre.

Plaquet now was frantic, in a frenzy of eagerness surpassing that of the morning. With an exultant cry he gazed in at the rear of the wagon, saw the deal-board coffin-box that it contained, and some loose tools lying beside it.

"They are here, Boyd, the tools," he shouted. "We now shall see if you are right. We will see if it is here—the pride of——"

"You'll do nothing of the kind at present," Boyd sharply interrupted, seizing him by the shoulder and drawing him away.

"Boyd——"

"Peace! Are you mad, Plaquet? These are the hirelings only. I want the master."

"You are right again and——"

"And no time must be wasted," Boyd again interrupted, irresistible in such moments. "Look after these two men, gendarmes. You have the others secured, eh? Very good—very good! Into the wagon, Jimmie; and you, Plaquet. Await our return, gendarmes. We will bring you the master to go with the menials."

Boyd was upon the wagon-seat, ribbons in hand, with his companions crouching behind him.

Leaving the gendarmes to look after the men already secured, Boyd drove on more calmly and leisurely over the starlit road. Little was said, for he insisted upon caution and quietude. Yet the ride that brought them to the end of their night mission was not long.

Nearly where the road to Clamart branches from that to Versailles, there appeared a second covered wagon emerging from a narrow road.

As they were about to pass, a moment later, a huddled form on the seat of the wagon leaned forward and softly cried:

"That you, Paul?"

"Yes," growled Boyd. "Drive on a little, that I may back up to you."

A gaunt figure beside the first speaker urged his horse on a few steps.

Boyd and his companions sprang quietly down and darted to the front of the other wagon, two at one step, Boyd at the other. There was an ugly ring in the latter's voice, an uglier gleam from the weapon that rose in the starlight, when he spoke to the man on the seat.

"Come down, Herr Ludwig, you and your servant," he cried. "Come down, and make no fuss—unless you feel sure that coat you wear is proof against a bullet. Come down, Herr Ludwig, and let us fit you both to a pair of bangles."

There were two wagons driven back to the Porte de Versailles.

There was one driven at eleven o'clock that night into the courtyard of the Louvre. The bells of Paris had not struck the midnight hour when it departed.

It had left, again in proud pose upon her waiting pedestal, a stolen goddess all unconscious of the outrage done her—the Venus de Milo, unrivaled amid the treasures of art with which she dwells. The inlaid floor in her sanctuary of variegated marble now was cleared—and the doors of the salon were open as usual next morning.

To this day, in the secret archives of the Paris police, enrolled as the chief figure in one of the most remarkable cases there recorded, there may be read by the few privileged to read—the name of Mr. Felix Boyd.

It was precisely twelve o'clock when Felix Boyd loosened his collar and cravat in the parlor of his apartments that night, then reached for his tobacco and pipe. The Central Office man's heels were elevated to the edge of the table.

"It's just as I told you this morning, Jimmie; there are crimes committed in

Paris that would not be dreamed of in any other city in the world," Boyd observed, as he pressed home the tobacco and struck a match. "The better the police service, the greater the ingenuity displayed by criminals. It's a dead open-and-shut cinch, Jimmie, that's what it is."

Jimmie Coleman nodded and removed his pipe.

"I reckon you're right, Felix; you always are," he said musingly. "But how the deuce did you get wise to this affair? That beats me!"

"That so, Jimmie?" Boyd smiled and sat down. "Then I'll tell you how I discovered the truth, and at the same time divest the discovery of all the mystery and merit you ascribe to it. It was curious, in a way, yet superlatively simple."

"Humph!" grunted Coleman. "Your idea of simplicity and mine are about as near alike as chalk and cheese."

Boyd laughed, and sank back in his easy chair.

"Follow me, Jimmie, and see how simple it was," said he. "I stumbled upon a pointer to the truth even before I knew the crime had been committed."

"The deuce you did!"

"You remember that I called your attention to Herr Ludwig in the Salle des Cariatides. He appeared absorbed in viewing a piece of statuary."

"I remember."

"Yet I incidentally noticed that his attention was not on the statue. I saw that he was listening, also craftily casting furtive glances toward the gallery doors. I wondered for what he was so stealthily watching and listening. I knew for what, Jimmie, when I learned of the crime."

"He had come there to see if it had been discovered, and what was being done."

"That was my immediate impression," nodded Boyd. "It was confirmed by his reluctance to depart, moreover, and by what I already had heard about him."

"What was that, Felix?"

"A friend pointed him out to me in

the Luxembourg yesterday. He stated that Ludwig is an art connoisseur, and is said to be a collector of rare art treasures for one Baron Heiglehoff, an aged and eccentric recluse, who dwells in some isolated old castle somewhere up on the Rhone. He has barrels of money, this Heiglehoff, and a pronounced mania for securing gems of art, for which he will pay fabulous prices, yet which he buries away in his stronghold for the inspection of nobody but himself."

"Evidently an old crank," growled the Central Office man.

"That's about the size of it," Boyd assented. "Jimmie, I at once felt tolerably sure that Ludwig, at the instigation of his employer, had put up a very crafty job and a bundle of money to secure the Venus de Milo."

"Well, you hit it right," grinned Coleman, through a veil of smoke.

"Now note how easily I got at the truth, which the prefect of police only suspected," Boyd smilingly continued. "I quickly was convinced that the fit of Ferrol was a blind, that the five workmen and at least one attendant were Ludwig's tools, that the Venus had been carried out under cover, instead of a man, and that the statue then was in the keeping of one of Ludwig's confederates."

"What convinced you of all that?"

"Several statements that were made, which I felt sure must be false. One workman testified that he returned to the salon to get his tools, and saw the Venus there after Ferrol had been removed. Jimmie, masons do not remove their tools until their work is done, and the work in the Louvre was not then completed."

"Humph! I see the point."

"One of the attendants also told the same lie—the one who had made it a point to assure the gendarmes at the outer door, thus heading off an investigation of the covered burden that was being brought out. Plainly enough, that attendant was in Ludwig's employ."

"Surely."

"Next, Jimmie, the fact that the cov-

ered wagon of a junk-dealer was so handy to the Louvre at just the moment it was wanted, convinced me that its owner, Delande, was also in the game. I reasoned, however, that Delande would not retain the statue, as he might be liable to immediate suspicion, and his house, shop, and stable quickly searched. I felt sure that he must have got rid of it."

"Yes, yes, naturally."

"Having gathered these points, Jimmie, I used my own brains to fathom how the trick must have been turned," continued Boyd. "Ferrol pretends to fall in a fit, frothing at the mouth, a froth produced by soap and spittle. The honest attendant is despatched for a wagon—known to be waiting. Ferrol then leaps up, claps on a disguise, and in a jiffy the statue is under the canvas and Ferrol is helping the workmen remove it."

"But there were five workmen," growled Coleman. "What became of the fifth?"

"He slipped out of his overalls and blouse, which might have betrayed his vocation, and he easily left the Louvre with the numerous other cleaners employed there on Mondays. None would naturally have suspected him."

"Ah, I see."

"To continue my own reasoning," smiled Boyd. "Upon arriving at his door, Ferrol, with disguise removed, was taken into the house by one workman and the driver of the wagon. See the point, eh? Ferrol must have been the second workman in the wagon, since the driver's aid was required, and the statue obviously was the object under the canvas."

"Yes, yes; sure thing."

"The wagon being covered, naturally the neighbors could not see into it, and the statement that the other workman, only a myth, remained in the wagon to help lift Ferrol out, was a lie."

"Certainly."

"Thus I figured out how the trick probably was done, which we since have confirmed," Boyd went on. "Three serious questions then stared me in

the face. Was it possible that Ferrol still was feigning to be in a fit, and so cleverly as to deceive Plaquet and the doctors? What had become of the Venus de Milo? How was it to be located? Those were the three questions, Jimmie."

"Posers, I should have called them," laughed Coleman.

"Yet the answers were obtained quite easily," smiled Boyd. "Upon entering the house of Ferrol, I saw a man hastening out through the rear alley."

"Ludwig's servant?"

"Exactly," nodded Boyd. "I had seen him with Ludwig at the Luxembourg, and I now was sure I was on the right track. An examination of Ferrol convinced me that his fit now was genuine. Upon questioning his mother, however, I learned that his fits were periodical, that he could tell to a day when he would have one, and it instantly dawned upon me that all of the circumstances had been learned by Ludwig, and advantage taken of them to have Ferrol feign a fit the previous day and make off with the Venus de Milo. Naturally, Jimmie, the fact that Ferrol would be found in a cataleptic fit the next day, would tend strongly to confirm the statements of all of his confederates, and avert suspicion of the actual truth."

"I believe your story," declared Coleman. "It was a most remarkable scheme, Felix, for a fact."

"There were but a few more steps, Jimmie," laughed Boyd. "I got another and my most valuable clue at the house of Ferrol. I observed that his mother, when not in conversation, was constantly moving her lips, a habit of some aged persons when in thought. By watching her lips, Jimmie, I discovered that she was constantly repeating the words: 'Porte de Versailles; ten to-night.'"

"Holy smoke!"

"You see the point, I observe," smiled Boyd. "It at once struck me that Ludwig's servant had been there to give Madame Ferrol instructions which he dared not put on paper, and which she was to impart to some person whom

neither Ludwig nor the servant felt it safe to visit."

"The one who then had the statue," put in Coleman.

"Surely," nodded Boyd. "That person was to come to Madame Ferrol and receive the instructions left by the servant."

"Exactly."

"So I made a pretense for waiting till he came, which luckily occurred in about a quarter-hour. It proved to be Ferrol's cousin, an undertaker, and I at once saw the rest of the scheme. The Venus was to be removed in a casket box, placed in an undertaker's wagon, and carried out by the Porte de Versailles at ten to-night. Presumably it was to be delivered somewhere out of the city, or received by Ludwig himself at some prearranged point on the road to Versailles."

"Yes, yes, I see."

"I clinched this, Jimmie, by noting that Madame Ferrol's lips ceased to move after Canole's departure. There no longer was any occasion for her to remember the instructions she had been carrying in mind."

"Very good, Felix. Very good, indeed."

"You may wonder why I did not advise, on this evidence, the immediate arrest of Canole and the searching of his place," added Boyd. "There were several reasons. There might have been difficulty in proving our case, in locating the statue, or in tracking him and his team this evening. Then, too, he might have feared suspicion and craftily have confided the work to another, of whom we know nothing. I reasoned that the sure way was to be

at the Porte de Versailles at ten o'clock, Jimmie, and there collar our man."

"That was the proper caper, Felix."

"You missed me part of this afternoon, Jimmie," smiled Boyd, in conclusion. "I went out to learn where Ludwig was, and how employed. With but little difficulty, I found out that he had hired a covered wagon and left the city in the direction of Versailles. It then was like adding two and two, Jimmie, to deduce that we should meet Ludwig on the road to-night."

"By Jove! Felix, you've done a wonderful piece of work," Coleman now declared warmly. "Talk about your French police and detectives—why, old pal, you can give them cards and spades, and then win the game at a canter."

Mr. Felix Boyd laughed softly, as if pleased, then laid aside his pipe.

"Well, yes, Jimmie, I did most of the work, for a fact; but it remains for the French police to clean up after me," he rejoined, with a yawn. "They'll hush the affair. It will not do to let it be known that such a treasure could be stolen from the Louvre. The police will come out with clean skirts, never fear. The public will never know the truth, despite that the culprits will get what's due them. It was unfortunate for Ludwig that haste was imperative. If the Venus had not been found to-day, by to-morrow Paris would have been cordoned with troops, and a search of the city high and low begun. Ludwig anticipated that much, and he lost no time. He now must take his medicine, and his hirelings, also. Behold the hour, Jimmie. Let's go to bed."



A Son of the Plains

By Arthur Paterson

Author of "A Man of His Word," "The King's Agent," Etc.

CHAPTER XIII.

WAR TO THE KNIFE.



WITHOUT further words the three stole softly down the stairs, Nan first with the light, Maizie and Nat following, Shep covering the rear. As they passed through the passage at the foot of the stairs, they heard the laughter and loud talking of the men in the saloon, and Maizie turned so white that Nat feared she was about to faint, but she looked up into his face and smiled, and walked bravely on through the kitchen, where a Chinaman was washing dishes.

He took no notice of them, and they reached the door where Nat had entered first of all. Nan opened it, and signed to Maizie to pass out. Nat she touched on the shoulder, and as he looked into her face he saw that her eyes were full of tears.

"You see, I done it, boy," she whispered hoarsely, "though it may be my death. But that is naught. I'd do it again twenty times, though they killed me every time. What I want to say is, should they corral you spite of all, tell them to bring you back to Nan's and kill you there. I'll be ready for that, and maybe we'll contrive a way to fool them even then."

She gave him a pat on the shoulder, and before he could answer pushed him into the street and shut the door in his face: Nat drew Maizie's arm within his own, and looked warily about him. The first part of the work he had set out to do this morning was done, but in

a strange town, with nothing but their own feet to trust to, and the nearest point of safety forty miles away, there was a great deal left to do.

Amenta was brisk and busy. Every one but the storekeepers was lounging, chatting, and smoking on and off the sidewalks. Nat and Maizie found themselves in the midst of a crowd of idlers, many of whom began at once to take a lively interest in their movements.

There was a rising moon, the sky was almost cloudless, and, though the flaring lamps of the stores threw dark shadows around their narrow arcs of light, a more unfortunate time could hardly have been chosen for the object Nat had in view. Worst of all, he could tell by the convulsive twitch Maizie gave at his arm, when two men hailed her with some rude banter in passing, that her nerves had not recovered from the shock her recent danger had given them, and yet, for the ordeal she had to pass through now, coolness was vitally necessary.

Maizie hoped that Nat would choose some dark path along which they could slip unperceived. But he knew that to avoid light and the public way, in spite of its dangers, would be fatal.

His quick eye noticed that the instant Nan's door closed upon them more than one man stopped to look at Maizie. Probably Rathlee had carried her openly through the town. If so, the only chance of preventing a hue and cry being raised was to saunter down the street among the rest, and not to attempt escape into the darkness until the limit of the light was reached.

Nat, therefore, with a whispered word of encouragement, boldly passed

those who turned to look at them, and, with an air of unconcern that his Indian training had thoroughly taught him how to assume, walked on, taking the center of the road where the crowd was thinnest, but stopping at intervals, as if to examine the goods displayed in some of the windows of the stores.

So warily and at so leisurely a pace was he obliged to take his way, that it was half an hour before the busy part of Amenta had been passed.

It was one of the worst half-hours Maizie ever endured. Twice, men swaggering by in jingling spurs, broad-brimmed sombreros, and Indian shirts gaudily embroidered with beads and fringes, would have jostled her rudely but for Nat's quickness in perceiving their intention. As a result, they ran against him instead, and one had his toes badly pounded, and the other received the point of an elbow in his ribs, and nearly lost his balance altogether.

Both used strong language, and turned to pick a quarrel; but Nat slipped to one side and stood so still, and looked so innocent, that they half-believed it must have been some one else, and passed on, grumbling.

Once a man, very drunk, went so far as to lay a hand on Maizie's shoulder. She gave a little cry, and hid her face in Nat's coat, thinking all was over. He caught the man by the neck, and with a wrench and a twist sent him reeling back upon a friend, also drunk, who first cursed him savagely, and then, seeing what had happened, struck as savagely at Maizie with a heavy wagon-whip.

Nat drew her out of reach of the blow, and spoke to Shep. The next instant the owner of the whip was yelling like a maniac and dancing with pain, having received a bite in the upper part of his heel that would have lamed him for life but for the heavy boots he wore.

A crowd instantly gathered round. If they sympathized with the enemy, it would go hard with Nat; but they did not. Even in Amenta a blow aimed at a woman was considered bad taste. And

amid cries of "Well sarved," "Bully for the dog," "Bite him again, waggo," the man was hustled away, and Nat and Maizie passed on unmolested.

The end of the main street was now at hand, and, after a little diplomatic loitering at the last of the stores, they slipped into the comparative darkness beyond, and had nothing now to fear but systematic pursuit from Rathlee. There was no danger of Nat losing his way. He could guide himself by the stars as easily as by the sun, and he knew the direction of Chico Springs.

Maizie began to recover her spirits. The cool, refreshing air and the freedom from interference soothed and quieted her fears. She no longer expected at every moment to hear the shouts of the Rathlee gang.

Away from the confined space of her prison, and alone with Nat, she regained her steadiness of nerve, and replied in the old tranquil tone when asked if she wanted to rest:

"I feel so strong that I believe I could walk to Chico Springs. Everything that has happened since this morning seems like a dream—a horrible nightmare, out of which you have wakened me, Nat. I feel wonderfully brave with you."

She smiled into his face in the moonlight, a smile which ought to have made him the happiest of men. But Nat saw nothing. This lull in the storm and stress of the day depressed his spirits as much as it raised Maizie's. It gave him time to remember that the question he had been tearing his heart out to ask all these weeks since the parting at Chico Springs was answered; the dumb, unacknowledged hope which had prevented him from leaving New Mexico until he had seen her again was extinguished. An hour ago his heart would have leaped with happiness to hear her say this. Now—it only ached.

Nat was not naturally obtuse, but he was very ignorant. That Maizie, unknown to herself, could by any possibility care for him, while imagining that he loved Bel, never occurred to his simple mind, and never would. Proud,

diffident, and very reserved, nothing but the imminent danger of losing his life in the coming struggle with Rathlee would have brought Nat to the point of declaring his love, without encouragement, which he would never have received from Maizie—and now—he had done with it forever.

She was as dear to him as before, for his love had no tinge of selfishness about it; but the light of his life had gone out, and nothing that befell him mattered—that was all.

Maizie received no answer, and wondered at the grimness of Nat's face. But an explanation which satisfied her was not long in coming. They had been walking briskly since leaving the light behind. Now Nat stopped, and, dropping on one knee, listened intently.

"We must shelter somewhere," he said, in a quiet tone; "they are on the trail. Let us see what can be made of this shanty."

He took her hand, and laid it within his arm with a caressing, reassuring pressure that was very comforting. In the pleasure of this, she almost forgot to think of Sandy Rathlee.

A few paces ahead there lay what had once been an adobe hut, such as Mexicans build. It was a poor, tumble-down place, now roofless, with two square gaps where windows used to be, and nothing but an outer wall standing seven feet high, and one within half-destroyed. But the walls were as solid as if built of cast iron, and a desperate man, well armed, would be an unpleasant adversary to dislodge from the inner room. Here Nat placed Maizie, first lighting a match and looking for possible snakes. Then, leaving Shep on guard beside her, he stole outside to listen.

The gang were on the way. He could hear the quick, irregular tramp of feet, now and then pausing, as if they were inquiring of people in the street, but moment by moment growing more distinct. He listened for any sound from Chico Springs, but there was none, nor could there be for hours yet. He returned to Maizie.

"They are coming?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Are they following our track?"

"No."

"They may pass us, then?"

"They may."

There was an ominous doubt in the way Nat said this, and Maizie watched his preparations with slowly sinking heart. First Nat spoke to Shep, caressing his ears. "Keep quiet, old dog, only fly if they lay a hand on her—guard her, guard." And Shep, understanding well, nestled up by Maizie and licked her hand.

Then his revolver was placed on the low partition wall. His knife he took in his left hand, thoughtfully presenting the blade to the moonlight, and watching it glitter there. Then he placed Maizie in the innermost recess, and crouched beside her. They were holding one another's hands now, for the tramp of the pursuers was drawing very near. Both thought of the same thing at the same moment, and Maizie whispered: "Your pistol is in a pocket of my dress—I remembered what you said."

He pressed her fingers, then swiftly turned and laid his hand upon the wall. Though the rustle of feet on the grass had been growing more distinct, no voices had been heard, but now, only a few yards away, Maizie heard a hoarse whisper, which brought her heart to her mouth.

"Stop, Sandy; hold, I say. Who'll bet they ain't hidin' in the Sanchez shanty? The likeliest kind of place. What?"

"You be——" retorted another voice—Rathlee's. "They have gone a mile past this."

"Anyway, let's go through it first."

"You may"—with a deeper curse than before—"I will not. The blasted place gives me the shivers. Come away; we only waste time talking. Leave two of the boys. Here, Ike and Mick, stay here while we prospect farther on. We'll call for you on the way back, no fear."

There was a sound as of grumbling, and then the tramp of feet died away, and Maizie breathed again. Something

touched her lips—Nat's finger, and she knew that the hut was watched, and the faintest whisper or movement might be fatal. After a time the men outside grew tired of keeping quiet, and began to talk.

"If this ain't foolishness," said one, in a peevish tone, "call me a Chinaman! What's Sandy mean? If he's uncertain whether the cuss is there, why don't he strike a light and find out? Where's the sense of leaving us laying round? Nan's whisky must have churned his brain—such as he ever had. If I were bossing the outfit, I'd see daylight through every bit of cover as I went along. What say?"

"Say?" replied a deeper voice, dry and sarcastic. "I say that there never was a man so smartly on the spot as Ike O'Rourke thinks himself to be. There's only one drawback; he never does anything. If you feel mean, pard, go in yourself. We'll wait patient as monuments till you come out again. For me, I'd rather stay here; I hev heard too much of Comanche Nat to chance my carcass near him in the dark. As for Sandy, every child in Amenta knows why he'll hold back from Sanchez shanty if he can. You never heard it? Listen:

"Sanchez was a greaser with a few colts, and was the best rider I ever saw with a yellow face. Sandy was rather partial to him for a while; but they quarreled at Nan's one night, and Sandy shot him. Sanchez left a widder and a baby, and what does Rathlee do but step out about midnight, after taking entry drinks, and come down here to tell this widder what he'd done!

"Well, Ike boy, never did a man make a worse mistake. She were waitin' for him, and wildcats weren't in it when she saw his wicked face.

"He thought she would be weepin', and might be comforted. She were heating a pan of scalding grease, and that was what he got full in the mouth. Wonder it didn't kill him, but she aimed too low, and he still had his sight, and his knife, and his great strength; and the pain made him mad.

"Soon afterward folk saw the hut afire, but none saw Sandy, nor knew where he went; and the widder and the baby, they were never seen again. That's why he's held clear of the place to-night, and will do, unless he's dead sure the girl's inside. They say he hears that baby crying still, when he's been drinking overmuch.

"He's done many things, but I guess he never did a worse night's work than that. Yet, after all, it ain't your funeral, Ikey boy. Now, come, light your match like a man, and tell us what you see inside. I'll stand a drink, too, if you air in a fit condition afterward to take it down."

The speaker ended his offer with a chuckle. It was received with an oath.

"I'd sooner be toasted by Apaches than put a foot in the cursed place, if that's the truth. Sandy must wrastle with his own spooks; nary a one will I face for him. I 'most wish I'd let him go alone; durned if I ain't got the creeps, and hear the baby whine myself! Killing *men* is right and businesslike, but babies—ugh! it makes me sick. What say yourself?"

"That's just so, Ike, and you'll find the rest of the boys agree. If the girl is in here, as I believe she must be, Sandy will have to run his funeral alone until he gits her out. Here he comes, cursin' like blue smoke."

Sandy Rathlee was in an evil mood. With the consideration for his feelings characteristic of their race, the desperadoes who surrounded him had not failed to make pointed allusions to the episode at Sanchez shanty ever since they left it behind, and, as no trace of the fugitives could be found ahead, Rathlee was at last obliged to declare that he would search the place without delay, if it were only to vindicate his courage. He knew well that if he once let a doubt be cast upon his nerve, his leadership and place among his gang would be lost.

"Hand round a candle, boys, he said, pausing in the doorway of the hut. But no one had a candle. They had not even a match among them which they could lend Sandy Rathlee.

"Then we must fire through the place. Two of you climb the walls to north and east, and let fly into the center. Ike, fire through the windows here. The rest stand and be ready, if he makes a bolt."

There was a pause. No one stirred. Rathlee lost his temper, and poured forth curses freely right and left, and said he would go alone.

Some one laughed, and a piping voice remarked cheerfully: "You're talking sense now, boss. That's miles better than to burn powder in the house, and p'raps shoot the girl by mistake. There's been enough of that done here already. Go in yourself; we'll take care nobody but you comes out."

A deep silence followed these words, and all the men stood expectant, looking at Rathlee. When he saw that there was no way out of it, he tossed his head and laughed contemptuously.

"You are a brave crowd! Upon my word, if I had no more spunk than you, I'd hang myself! I'll go in. Keep clear of the doorway, or you might get hurt."

He turned from them, but as he reached the door he paused and started back; for a voice within said quietly: "If you want to die, just take another step. Boys, will you let me have fair play?"

If Nat had spoken with the excited emphasis of a man in desperate straits, his appeal would have been laughed at. As it was, the quietness of his tone and the sudden withdrawal of Rathlee from his perilous position made a great and instantaneous impression on the men, and the hasty order of their leader: "Pile in, every man after me, and stop his gabble now," came too late. Not a man moved, while Rathlee himself, feeling it was certain death to venture in alone, held back, and waited to hear his enemy speak again.

"My meaning, friends," Nat went on more quietly than before, "is this. Sandy Rathlee and I were to have had a game to-night. I found he was going to crowd me out if he won, so I left town, and took the stakes away. You have corralled me. I don't deny it; but

I won't give her up while I can fight. You are all straight men. Let me play Sandy Rathlee now, but with knives, not cards, and let the one who lives carry off the prize. If you say yes to this, we'll fight it out before you all."

Nat paused and waited for the answer. It was a touch and go. While the calm audacity of the proposal pleased the fancy of the men, they had sufficient deference toward Sandy to hesitate before forcing him to accept terms for one who lay virtually in his power. The reply came from Rathlee himself: "If that suits the boys, it suits me."

A shout of approval greeted these words, and amid the cries of "Well spoke, Sandy," "Make a ring for them right here," Nat, stopping to kiss Maizie's hand, stepped out into the moonlight, leaned quietly against the wall of the hut, and waited.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEATH-GRIPS.

The moon was riding high now, the stars were at their brightest. Nothing was wanting to favor the combatants in their struggle, and to heighten the enjoyment of the onlookers. There was some disappointment expressed by the inexperienced when they saw how slightly built and puny the sheepman looked beside the burly Rathlee, but the older men smiled at one another. The weakest man, they knew well, is formidable when he is fighting for his life. Still, no one doubted that Rathlee would win.

The ground was chosen, the ring formed. The men took off their coats, rolled up their sleeves, and faced one another. So intent were the crowd now upon the coming fight, that Maizie, unable to remain in the hut, stole up unperceived, and with Shep beside her, showing every tooth in his head, looked on at what followed.

Slowly the men circled round one another, drawing close by imperceptible degrees, their eyes fixed with the in-

tensity of tigers — nearer — nearer — nearer — until one should spring.

It was the culminating point of Nat's life. Again and again since he had known Maizie he had bitterly regretted the Indian training which had often kept him silent when he would have spoken, and made him appear hard and cold when his heart was full of sympathy. But now he thanked God for those long, miserable years. Rathlee had the advantage of superior strength, reach, and height, but Nat had something more valuable than all these.

Now! With a swift lunge of body, arm, and hand, Rathlee sprang forward, his head bent, his left arm held low, the elbow outward to guard any sudden thrust; his knife in his right hand, so turned that, could he get near enough, with one powerful side stroke he would drive it between Nat's ribs.

A savage yell rose from the onlookers. Nothing but nimbleness, combined with extreme quickness of eye and judgment, could save Nat; but, as Rathlee charged, his enemy stepped backward, and shifting rapidly to the right, and avoiding the blow, stepped in almost at the same moment, inflicting a heavy thrust in Rathlee's arm, which dropped to his side.

The shouts of the crowd died away; the most confident now felt nervous.

On Rathlee himself the repulse acted like strong wine. Making his wounded arm a shield, he bounded swiftly at Nat. There was no avoidance possible of this attack; Nat met it squarely, and Rathlee's knife sank deep into his shoulder.

They closed, and Nat struck two blows in return, so swiftly that no one saw where they went. Rathlee reeled and staggered like a drunken man, struck madly at the air, threw up his arms, and fell heavily backward.

A long, whispering breath of surprise passed through the crowd of men. The end was so unexpected and came in so sudden a way that for a moment they stood agape at what they saw. Then they surged forward to examine the prostrate man.

Nat stood aside, and, seeing Maizie, went quickly to her.

She clutched his arm. "Are you hurt?"

"A little; but that is nothing. You should not have left the hut."

"What will happen to us now?"

"If they keep their word, we are free to go."

But this did not seem likely. With the proposal of a fight for their diversion before them, the gang could afford to be merciful, and even generous, but now the tables had turned. Nat had barely time to get his revolver from the hut, when he found himself surrounded by lowering, threatening faces, and heard whispers that proved his position to be as precarious as ever. He had only one more card to play.

"Friends," he said, looking slowly round, Maizie clinging to his arm, "our contract said that the man who kept his feet should go. I could claim that right now, but I will not. Come back and drink with me at Nan's; and if there is any man who says the fight was not fought fair, you can judge what best to do with me."

The men looked at each other askance, like bulls who would like to charge, but wait for each other to begin. At length the man with the piping voice spoke out: "I reckon the offer is fair. Things will look clearer presently. I'll go with you, Comanche Nat, for one."

This was enough; the rest agreed willingly, and, keeping Nat well in the center, trudged back to town. Behind them, still and lifeless, lay all that remained of Sandy Rathlee.

The townsfolk of Amenta marveled as they saw the returning gang; and when it was whispered abroad that the sheepman had slain the desperado in open fight, so many followed to Nan's that there was hardly standing-room at the bar. Nan was also there, actively at work assisting the burly bartenders. When she saw Nat and his following, and noted the absence of Rathlee, she took in the situation at a glance.

"Back soon, boys! You've caught more than you sought for? Sandy gone? Is that so? Well, give your

orders sharp. I close early to-night. You stand, do ye, sonny? That seems unnatural for a wounded man. Hi there, boys, make way, and let that girl come round to me. Crowds of your nature ain't no place for her."

Nan Sheehan's word was law in her own house—at least up to a certain point—and in a twinkling she had whisked Maizie out of the press, and placed her in a chair behind the bar. That was something gained, and Nan smiled to herself as she saw the look of relief in Nat's face.

But Nan's chief anxiety was Nat himself. Though composedly handing drinks along the counter to the men with his right hand, Nat never moved his left, and Nan felt sure by the paleness of his face that he was severely wounded, and probably losing blood. Yet she dared not make any sign of sympathy toward him. She knew, none better, the temper of the men.

For the moment Nat's free-handedness maintained a party in his favor strong enough to repress the inclination of others to revenge Rathlee's death; but as the liquor mounted to the brains of his admirers, there was only too much danger that they would become as violent as the rest.

When Nan became convinced of this she felt that desperate measures must be taken. Through Rathlee's death matters had become far more critical than she had expected when she told Nat to return to her, and while she admired the courage which had enabled him to dispose of his enemy and hold in check the very men who had gone forth to help in his destruction, she saw clearly that not only was his life in imminent danger, but that her influence could avail nothing, and that to keep her word with him was only to share his fate.

For an instant she hesitated. She was prosperous in worldly goods, and life was sweet. Her championship of this boy was sheer madness. She had but to retire to her private room, give orders to her men to close the saloon when all was over, and there would be no more trouble for her.

She looked at the dark, threatening faces of the men, and bit her lip in indecision. Then she met Nat's eyes, full of unspoken appeal. Her face became firm and hard.

She whispered to the bartenders, and two shotguns, loaded with slugs, were taken from a recess beneath the counter and placed upon a chair. These weapons Nan carelessly laid on the counter, as if they had been beer-jugs.

"Another drink, son—no? Then I've done business for to-night." She raised her voice so that it should be heard by all. "Billy, git to the door, and open it for the folk. Boys, I'm closing. No more drinks till to-morrow morning. I will wish you all good night. Comanche Nat, I want you here."

While speaking, Nan slid back the panel by which she had admitted Maizie; Nat stepped through it before the men on either side were aware of his intention, and drew the bolt behind him. He was now separated from the crowd by the counter, flanked with shelves piled with cigar-boxes, siphons, bottles of wine, and all the paraphernalia of a Western saloon.

The gang was balked of its prey again. But it was only for the moment. A fierce cry of remonstrance came from many lips, and no one moved toward the door.

"See here, Nan," said one—a man with a deep scar across his face, the mark of Jeff Collingwood's whip at Clinter's Ford—"this will not do. You may shut your old saloon, but you don't interfere with business. We'll trouble you to let that man come back, and his girl with him. She belongs to us, anyway, and we ain't done with him, not by any means."

He raised his voice at the end, and was answered by an ominous growl of assent from those around him.

Nan Sheehan laughed mockingly. "Ain't you, Mick? Then put this in your pipe. Comanche Nat and all that belongs to him are under my protection. He stays here until he wants to go, and any one who disagrees will have to go through me."

She spoke slowly, looking round from face to face, and, having spoken, laid hands upon her gun.

A visible wave of astonishment passed through the crowd, and there was a lull; but only for an instant. Then the growl of anger and menace rose again, and more than one voice shouted: "Take her at her word!"—while right and left revolvers sprang out of sheath, and Nat, whose eyes were everywhere, saw a man take deliberate aim at Nan. A double report rang out, the man's arm was broken below the elbow, and his shot flew wide. Nan looked round with a smile.

"You saved me, lad."

She had not time to say more before a dozen shots rattled round the bar, and there was a mighty crash of broken glass; but the aim had been too hasty, and no one was hurt.

Nan's blood was up at last. "Cowards," she shrieked; "take that!"—and, bringing her shotgun to her shoulder, she fired both barrels at the men nearest at hand.

A frightful yell of pain, and then a storm of bullets in reply. The room filled with smoke. Nat, crouching behind a whisky-barrel, saw that Nan was struck. She had made no attempt to protect herself, and now reeled heavily against him. Yet, blind and bleeding as she was, she caught up the second gun, and fired with such fearful effect into the men now leaping upon the counter with their knives, that for the moment it was swept clear, and no one dared to take the place of those who fell.

And now a new sound was in the air. Above the crash of window-glass, there was a roar of strange voices in the street outside, and from the door and from the windows came a sudden blaze of rifle-shots. The Rathlee gang turned, thunderstruck, to find themselves surrounded. For a moment or two they fought stubbornly, then, as the enemy burst into the saloon, they fled right and left, and held up hands for quarter.

"Hold, boys," said a stern voice—it was Ezekiel Mixer's—"give them one

chance. They have two prisoners—are these still alive?"

The firing ceased. The smoke cleared off, and the men held their breath. Then from the ruined counter came two figures, followed by a dog, and such a shout of joy went up as never had been heard in Nan's saloon before. Some one ran forward with outstretched arms.

"My little gell—unhurt? Thank God!" And from far and near many a voice echoed these words: "Thank God!"

CHAPTER XV.

MIXER'S MEN.

Nan Sheehan was not dead, nor was she likely to die, if the bleeding from a deep wound in her right side could be stopped in time. Moreover, she was so far conscious that when they lifted her from where she had fallen she spoke out cheerily, though in a faint voice.

"You've timed it, boys. Well done! Is that sonny on his feet? Then I don't care—— What? a doctor? You'll find one, if he's alive, in this saloon—Ned Wallbridge. But sonny first—he were wounded long ago."

Luckily enough, Doctor Ned Wallbridge was not only still in this world, though he had had a narrow escape, but proved equal to the occasion. As great a scamp as could be found in the county, or even in Amenta itself, he was a clever practitioner, and under the delicate circumstances under which he was placed he became anxious to do his best for his patients. By his orders Nan was carried to the private bar, where Nat had eaten his supper, and in a very few minutes her wounds were properly bandaged; Nat's shoulder was bound up, and the doctor pronounced them both to be doing well.

It was more difficult to persuade him to dress the wounds of the crippled members of the Rathlee gang, but a stern warning from Mixer as to his own fate if one wounded man was found neglected next morning conquered his disinclination to work for nothing, and he did his duty well.

Meanwhile, outside the saloon Amenta was in a state of excitement and confusion impossible to describe. Who and what were these men who had taken the saloon by storm and crushed the Rathlee gang? From mouth to mouth the news was whispered that they came not only to save the sheepman's daughter, but to take the town.

The news was true. For two years the citizens of Amenta had been allowed to cheat, oppress, and plunder all those who had no friends, and had made the town a by-word for corruption and crime. They would do so no more. The Anglo-Saxon race is long-suffering, but when the worm turns—look out!

Mixer's men—as the Chico Springs army was afterward called—were but fifty strong, while Amenta could put three times as many in the field; and, further, the former were weary with their ride of forty miles, and fought in a strange country, while the Amenta men defended their own hearthstones. Well might Mixer say to Jeff that morning, when the young man arrived from the ruined ranch with his blood aflame:

"Do not talk so much—keep your wind and strength for to-night. We go for rats in their holes, boy, and *rats die fighting.*"

But with all these advantages Amenta was in desperate straits. The only places in town that could stand siege were Nan's and the house of the treasurer of the race-course, and, thanks to Mixer's knowledge of the city, and the suddenness of his attack, the first was taken without the loss of a man. It is, however, a doubtful advantage to win too easily the first skirmish in a campaign. While Mixer and Jeff and other friends gathered round Nat and Maizie and Nan, the younger men, hot and thirsty, laid eager hands upon whatever liquor had survived the fray at the bar, and in a very short space of time would have been past praying for. Luckily Mixer saw the danger, and was among the wine-bibbers in two strides. "By the holy Moses, boys, you are

the hardest crowd of heroes ever seen in life! Listen! In five minutes the rowdies of this town will be coming through those windows. Is this the way you propose to meet the racket? I ask you the question—is it?"

Down went the glasses with a general laugh.

"We're done, boss. Take us to 'em, quick."

A man now ran in from the street.

"We'll be blocked, captain. They are creeping round us—a crowd double ours, and tough as you ever see."

Mixer gave one of his dry chuckles.

"Did you look for them to be tender? Now to work, boys—briskly."

The order did not come a moment too soon; and if the Amenta men had been led by another Ezekiel Mixer, Nan's saloon would have been the scene of the most sanguinary conflict of the night. But, though the enemy was formidable in point of numbers and determination, they were without a leader, and their movements were dilatory.

By the time they had definitely planned their mode of attack, Mixer had secured his prisoners in an upper room, brought down mattresses, and blockaded the parlor, where Nan lay under Maizie's care, with Dan Sheldford, whose nerves were still too much shattered for him to be of any service in the fight. Then, with Nat's assistance, Mixer formed an original plan of defense calculated to surprise the Amenta men.

When the attacking-party came within pistol-shot they prepared to receive a volley. None came. The saloon looked deserted. A wind had risen as the moon went down, and now moaned with a dreary sound through the broken windows. Every light had been extinguished, and a silence, strange and weird, had fallen over the place, as if it were under a spell.

In the street all was dark, too. The stores were shut, bolted, and barred, and their owners watched with anxious eyes the movements of their friends around the saloon. Some still cherished a hope that the strangers were merely

sheepmen come to rescue the girl and kill Rathlee. But the rest knew that the great feud was dead, and that this was a rising of settlers of all classes against an intolerable wrong.

The Amenta men advanced cautiously, but no sign of life appeared in the saloon. At last one among them waved his hat. It was the man with the scar on his face, who had been fortunate enough to escape the attack by Mixer's men.

"Boys," he shouted, "will you skulk here all night? Charge in, and whip the devils to kingdom come. Forward, every man!"

His words were as the spark to a powder-magazine. A yell and a cheer, and the men rushed on with an impetus that seemed likely to carry everything before it. Still there was no sign of life in the saloon. As a consequence, a considerable number of men rushed at the door—so many that they impeded one another's progress, while comparatively few attacked the windows.

On they came pell-mell, and the foremost were about to give the door a mighty kick, when it opened before them to its widest, and they saw what made their hearts stand still. Two paces from the door crouched a line of ten men, behind them another line, kneeling, and behind them again ten more standing.

As the door opened a voice cried "Fire!" and thirty rifles poured a volley forth, which swept down the Amenta men as a scythe mows grass, while from the windows and from the roof flew another hail-storm of bullets, striking down besiegers on all sides. They scattered like sheep, and those who could do so fled for their lives. Again Zeke spoke, his voice clear and distinct above all other sound.

"Sally out, boys, give them no time to breathe. Those on the roof lay still—the rest on with me."

With a thunderous cheer the Mixer men obeyed, and dashed down the street in hot pursuit. The enemy made no stand anywhere, but bolted hither and thither like rabbits, those who were quick enough taking refuge in the

houses round about until the street was clear.

And now what next?

The thoroughfare was won. The enemy were separated so effectually one from another that any rally on their part in sufficient numbers to overthrow the Mixer men was almost out of the question, but they were under cover, and began to gall their foes with a fire which could only be stopped in one way.

"Lie down, every one—lie down."

Mixer was obeyed, and the firing stopped. It was too dark to mark the figures on the ground. There was a pause. The boys became impatient, and called Mixer uncomplimentary names. But confidence in his resources kept them moderately quiet, and in a few minutes they found their faith well justified.

He had spoken to three men, who flew down the street to the saloon, and returned with something in their arms. Guided by Mixer, they went to the nearest house at a point where they could not be seen by the inhabitants. Then came the scrape of a match, a flash and a flare of light, and the mystery was solved. The men had brought torches, which had been lying ready for emergencies for weeks at Mixer's store. A steady wind was blowing; the dry wood of the frame shanty caught fire in a moment, and the flames darted up its walls with a devouring roar.

"Cover doors and windows!" was the cry, and when the people in the house, half-suffocated with smoke, came tumbling out coughing and choking, they found themselves surrounded.

"Down arms and surrender!"

And under the muzzles of the rifles the citizens obeyed. They were marched off under guard, both men and women—for there were many women in the town—and lodged at Nan's.

The next house was approached in the same way, with the difference that those within were called upon to surrender before the torches were applied.

They refused, the place was fired and stormed, and, with some loss, burned down, its occupants driven out, fighting still, to die.

The sight of the burning houses struck despair into the hearts of the citizens of Amenta. Some were for laying down their arms; but the majority, who—such were their past lives—knew that they fought with halters round their necks, preferred shooting, or even burning, to hanging, and fought with such fury that some of Mixer's principal allies began to waver.

"Why go on?" they asked. "The gang is split; the worst rowdies are all dead. We have done justice; to do more would be cruelty."

Mixer listened to these arguments without saying a word, though there were deep murmurs from the younger men. It was a strange situation. Those who counseled peace were ranchmen, whose daily business was often carried on in the face of great risk to life and limb; who had fought Indians—the bloodiest of all human foes—and would again; while Mixer, whose set lips and flashing eyes showed plainly the feelings with which he listened to their words, was a mere trader, who had not struck a blow or seen blood spilled for many years.

In reply to the waverers, he said with the quietness and deliberation habitual to him:

"My partners, you speak fair. We are made different, that is all. I left my wife and children. I rode forty miles for what? To save a girl and shoot Rathlee? No. I say *no*. That had to be done, and done first. But that was for the young men, and well they did it. I came for something more. The country you and me have lived in has been disgraced, and nigh cut to pieces by these men. We have to see that this shall never be again. You say, 'Let the place be left to repent its ways.' I say, 'Finish what you have begun. Take all, and try them justly before honest men.' That is what I'm here for. Stay by me or leave me, which you think is right. My body

don't leave Amenta till Amenta's ours. Those who feel this way *vamos now*."

Mixer caught up a torch, and, striding to the nearest house, planted it under the eaves on the windward side. With a mighty shout his men followed, not one holding back, and now the citizens of Amenta felt the end was near.

House after house was fired, stormed, and taken, until half the town was in flames. The strain upon the attacking-party began to tell, and Mixer sent to Nan's for reinforcements.

One of those who went was Nat, now completely exhausted. He managed to reach the saloon, give a message to Jeff, and then fainted—for the first time in his life.

A few minutes later those who had stayed behind to garrison Nan's took the place of their tired comrades, and Mixer, with Jeff at his right hand, found himself stronger than ever.

A new feature in the struggle now began. One after another of the houses was found to be empty. At first it was thought that, in spite of the vigilance of scouts, whom Mixer had placed to prevent escape, the people were leaving the town; but presently it was discovered that every man who could, had made his way to the house of the treasurer of the race-course.

Like Nan's, this building had two stories, but, unlike the saloon, the upper story was of wood. All that could be done, however, to make it formidable had been done. Every window and aperture was guarded by men with rifles, and a constant fire was poured upon the besiegers when any came within range. It was here that the last stand was to be made, and it would be an obstinate one.

To make matters worse, when Mixer's men began to invest the place, and, crouching low in the shadow, waited for the signal to attack, they heard the sobbing of women mingled with the wail of little children. Earnestly did Mixer call upon those within to surrender, warning them that no escape was possible. The answer was a volley of oaths, mingled with abuse

of the worst kind in a woman's voice, showing too clearly the character of the inmates. No alternative remained, therefore, and Mixer gave the word.

"Set to, boys. Look careful to the babies and women. No fire this time."

A volley, a counter-volley from the house, a rush at the door, and a sudden falling back. The door had holes bored through it, from which came the bullets of revolvers and the points of knives. The windows, also, were so well guarded that no impression could be made there.

"Steady," was Mixer's order. "Hold quiet while we try a surer way."

The attack ceased, upon which came jeering laughter from within, and the blood of Mixer's men boiled over. It was the first check, and they were in no mood to brook such opposition. One of them, with an oath, seized a lighted torch, and deliberately flung it on the roof. In another moment his example would have been followed by a dozen others, and the house be afire in as many places. But Mixer brought his rifle to the shoulder, there was a sharp report, and the man fell dead.

"I did that," Zeke said, looking round, "and if any one else calling himself a man puts his hand to burn out children, I will do it again."

No answer was given to this challenge, but those who had caught up torches dropped them one by one, as if they burned their hands.

And now arrived what Mixer had sent for as soon as he saw that the house was going to stand a siege. It was a huge vega, or beam, which had been left in a wagon near Nan's. Some of the boys hauled the wagon to the place of action, and a score of hands seized upon the beam, dragged it out, and with a run and a cheer brought it with tremendous force against the door.

Bolts, locks, and bars availed nothing now; with a heavy crash the door was carried off its hinges and laid flat in the hall, with two Amenta men under it, and half a dozen besiegers sprawling on top.

A yell and a rush of Mixer men; an

answering shout and a volley from within; then the angry sound of smothered shots and blows, groans and curses, as the attack and defense, each as stubborn as the other, surged through the hall, and up the stairs, and on from room to room. To add to the confusion and horror of it all, the lights had been put out, and the men fought in darkness.

In the front and fiercest heat of the fray was Mixer himself, and furious were the attacks made upon him when, by his voice, as he encouraged his men, his whereabouts became known. But he seemed to bear a charmed life—in point of fact he was protected by a guardian angel in the shape of Jeff Collingwood.

Jeff had grown to feel the strongest regard for Zeke Mixer. Though they had only known one another a few weeks, the nature of the storekeeper had impressed the younger man with extraordinary force, and where Mixer led Jeff would have followed, had it been into the pit of Tophet.

Go where Mixer might, Jeff was close at hand, with eyes that seemed to see in the dark as well as if it were day, with steady nerves, and with the strength and activity of two men.

Step by step and inch by inch the Amenta men were driven back. The hall was free, the stairs were free, and one after another of the rooms was taken.

At last one only at the top of the house was left. The women and children were huddled here with half a dozen of the wounded, and a few fighters, their eyes bloodshot, their limbs trembling with fatigue, but fierce to the last, and ready to make a sacrifice of the helpless ones, if, by so doing, they could kill a few more enemies before their own turn came. There was some light in this room, for the day was dawning, and in the roof was a large window with an eastern view.

Mixer entered the room first, and, ordering his men to stand, called upon all to surrender. His only answer was a savage oath, while the women and children looked on helplessly. Before

the struggle began, however, a sudden, sharp cry rang out: "Fire! Fire!" followed by an ominous glare from beneath the window, and a gush of smoke.

A universal shriek rose from the women. All resistance was at an end. The men, even the wounded ones, dashed through the window, and rolled or sprang off the roof; and it seemed as if the women would follow their example in sheer blind terror.

But Mixer's men, thanks to Zeke and Jeff, did not lose their heads. In less than five minutes a passage was cleared down the stairway, and through the blinding smoke man after man rushed at desperate speed, each bearing a child or a woman, according to his strength.

In the room itself, with the smoke curling through the boards beneath, and the atmosphere becoming hotter every moment, Jeff and Mixer kept the rest still. A crash below—the staircase had given way. The crisis was now terrible.

"On the roof, boy," Mixer gasped hoarsely to Jeff; "fresh air is the only chance."

One woman was already insensible, and how Jeff managed to lift her through the skylight to Mixer he never knew, but he did it; the rest, with his help, clambered up, and then they saw the full extent of their peril. The house was burning fiercely, and in a few minutes the roof must fall in with a crash.

Fortunately the wind had changed, and on the side where they were clinging there was little smoke. By this time the boys were all aware that their leader was in danger, and were crowded around the spot, some holding out a blanket. Into this the children were dropped safely, then the women. There was now but one more moment before the roof would go.

"Jeff, lad—jump!" cried Mixer, holding back.

Jeff said nothing, but putting a strong arm around Zeke, with a sudden jerk sent him flying, against his will, into the blanket. Another crash—the roof was falling—a cry from the crowd as Jeff nearly lost his balance, then a

ringing cheer, which was repeated again and again, when, black as coal, with hardly a hair left on his head, he leaped clear, and alighted on his feet among his friends, unhurt.

CHAPTER XVI.

MAIZIE'S EXPLANATION.

The fighting was over, Amenta was won, and Mixer's boys from being destroyers of life became ambulance men, nurses of the sick, and even cooks and maids-of-all-work.

The Western man, like the sailor, can turn his hand to anything, and when the sun rose every soul who had the use of his arms and legs, except the few told off to guard the prisoners, was hard at work.

The busiest of all—planning, ordering, doing all at once—was Zeke himself. His right arm was in a sling, and his head was bound up to cover a fearful gash over his left eye, but he made nothing of his hurts, and for two hours after his narrow escape from the burning house he labored untiringly to evoke order out of chaos.

At last he retired to eat some breakfast in Nan's parlor. Nan was here, sitting up, hardly less busy in her way than Mixer. She was not allowed to move, but from her couch she made shrewd and practical suggestions, gave information as to the whereabouts of stores of provisions and linen, and placed at Zeke's disposal everything she possessed.

By evening only the smoking ruins of the burned houses still gave evidence to the eye of what had happened in the preceding twenty-four hours. The dead were underground, the wounded in hospital; and even the prisoners, having been supplied with food and drink, and allowed as much liberty as the circumstances of the case admitted, were in better spirits, and talked cheerfully of suing Mixer for damages and false imprisonment.

The following day the principal ranchmen of the surrounding country rode in to congratulate Mixer, and to

take part in the trial of the prisoners. A jury of twelve of these was formed and sworn in. Mixer, by unanimous consent, was selected judge, and within three days every Amenta citizen, including Nan herself, had been brought to trial.

The prisoners were heard in their own defense, questioned by the jury, cross-questioned by the judge, and then summarily dealt with in one of three ways. Those against whom murder was proved were sentenced to death. Those who were known to have robbed or in other ways maltreated their neighbors, were heavily fined in amounts according to their means. Those against whom nothing definite was proved, but of whom much was suspected, were ordered to leave the town with all their belongings in twenty-four hours.

The most difficult case to deal with was Nan's. After long deliberation, the judge and jury were inclined to make the punishment merely nominal, in consideration of the protection she had afforded Maizie and Nat, her personal injuries, and the wreck of her saloon, which by the time all was over had been stripped of its stock and a great deal of its furniture. But the prisoner, to the astonishment of her judges, refused to be let off.

"Tain't fair," she said, when informed of the decision. "I have not robbed, neither have I killed. But I've helped the worst. I have winked at what I might have stayed. The boys of Amenta kep' me, good and bad alike. Put my name down and take two thousand dollars and what is left here, and tell me to quit the town." This was done, and early on the morning following her trial Nan set forth upon a journey.

She went to Chico Springs. Nat and Jeff, Maizie and her father were going that day, and Maizie, finding that the sick woman's one desire was not to lose sight of Nat, proposed that she should go with them. A light spring-wagon was chartered and fitted with cushions and pillows, and with Dan driving, Maizie in charge of Nan,

and Nat and Jeff riding, they set off, no one but Nan herself knowing that the doctor had expressed it as his deliberate opinion that a journey so soon would cause inflammation of her wound, and probably death.

Nan had her reasons for defying the doctor. She was anxious about Nat. Her eyes were sharp, and her perceptions, keen at all times, were quickened by the love she bore him. His reserve and the stoicism of his quiet manner, though proof against all other eyes, did not deceive her for an instant. While his friends found in his wound and the physical strain he had undergone sufficient explanation for his haggard looks and a settled despondency and silence which had marked him since the night in the saloon, Nan saw something more—something which robbed her of sleep at night far more than the pain of her wound—something that filled her with a feeling almost amounting to dismay.

She saw that life was worthless to him—because the girl he had so nearly died for only gave in return for all his love the affection of a friend. All this Nan saw clearly enough, and to see it was sufficient to make her determine to help him. But how?

She was sure that Nat had spoken and had been refused. He avoided being alone with Maizie. He rarely looked at her, or spoke to her. Moreover, it was plain that Maizie noticed this, and was pained and puzzled. Yet, closely as Nan watched the girl's face, she never once saw anything to give her ground for belief that Nat was making a mistake. And Nan was afraid of Maizie.

The journey was a long and tiresome one. It was very hot, and there was no shade for Nan but the wagon-tilt. This, added to her anxiety of mind, brought on inflammation, prophesied by Doctor Wallbridge, and while they were ten miles still from Chico Springs she became so ill that a halt was made at a ranch by the wayside, and Jeff rode forward to fetch a doctor.

The doctor came in a few hours, and with him Mrs. Mixer, who, touched by

the story Jeff told of Nan's devotion, came to be nurse-in-chief, bringing a buggy full of medicines and comforts. But Nan would have no nurse but Maizie, and the doctor pronounced her in so critical a condition that she must be allowed to have her way.

The fever steadily increased, Nan became delirious, and for twenty-four hours she lay between life and death.

The next day there were signs of a change. The delirium ceased, and she became conscious of her surroundings; and Maizie hoped that the worst was passed. But the doctor shook his head.

"There's no telling—but I don't like her looks. If she had lived as she'd ought, I believe she'd rally, but she has sp'iled the constitootion natur' give her by the keeping of saloons; and natur's rounding on her now. She'll sink."

The doctor spoke the truth. Nan had no more fever, and did not lose consciousness again; but she grew steadily weaker. She was in no pain, and lay there as peacefully as if her life had been blameless as a child's. From the beginning she told Maizie she had no hope herself.

"I felt I were gone, dear, when I dropped in the saloon. There's something tells one. That was why Judge Mixer found me so generous yesterday. I am not sorry to go. Seems as if I ought to, for, come to think, few of the boys, bad as they were, was half so bad as me. What? Sonny and you! Nothing is due to me. I stood out for you both 'cause I loved him. No virtue, noways, in fighting for what you love. Yes—I hev been bad, and there is not a parson anywheres, if he spoke the truth, who would dare to bet one cent upon my soul. Yet I'm not afraid to die. I know all 'bout hell-fire. As far as I can recollect, our minister taught nothing else where I were bred. Maybe he was right. I dunno—yet someway it is not that which holds my mind tightest. I believe that whatever they do to me that's bad, they'll let me see my baby boy. An' if they do, I'll not complain, no matter what happens."

She paused and closed her eyes, and opened them to say drowsily:

"Let me doze a spell while you bring sonny in. I don't feel I quite know when I may go, and I want to see his face."

Maizie rose gently, and then, struck by a painful look of yearning on the haggard face, from which all the coarse, hard lines had been refined away, she stooped over Nan and kissed her. The dying woman started, then raised herself with such a gesture as the one she had made when imploring Nat's confidence in the saloon, and clutched Maizie's hands.

"Do you mean that?" she gasped.

"Yes," said Maizie wonderingly.

"Then you will bear one word from the old woman 'fore she dies. I only want to ask a question just for to ease my mind. See, then. A while ago you was in danger. Now you are as safe as can be. Why? 'Cos a man stepped in alone where none else dared to go, and brought you out. I have lived many years; and when I was young I read many books, but I never saw nor read of any deed quite similar to Nat's. You feel so, too? You *do*? Yet he cannot reach your heart! There, I won't ask my question. What should a gell without a heart answer, anyway? Let him go back East to his folk. Better out of sight than to tear his heart in two loving what don't love him. Yet—I will ask my question, after all. Why is it? Why don't you love him with that love he has given you?"

While Nan was speaking she became more and more excited. Blue veins stood out on her forehead; she trembled all over; her brows drew down into their old frown, and her face, for all its thinness, became almost as fierce as when she defied the Rathlee gang.

Maizie paused a moment before speaking. Under Nan's gaze her cheeks had turned fiery red and her words came brokenly. Now she mastered her confusion and spoke in a quiet voice, though the flush was still upon her face.

"From what you said, you seem to think that Nat loves—me. It is my sister."

Nan opened her mouth here, but shut

it again without speaking. Maizie waited an instant, and then went on hurriedly:

"If you knew Bel, such an idea as this would never have occurred to you. She is beautiful, she is everything which I am not. I suspected what was going on when we traveled from Kansas—after he left us at Chico Springs I became quite sure. And only the other day he said something about it, and I——" Maizie cleared her throat.

Nan caught her up sharply.

"What did you say, little one? Tell me all."

"I only said"—Maizie spoke in a whisper now—"that I understood and loved him—as a sister."

Again Nan's eyes swept searchingly over the girl's face, and again that face reddened deeply. Neither of them spoke for a little while, then Nan murmured in a feeble voice:

"Kiss me—kittle one." And as Maizie bent over her—"You were right, my daisy," she added. "I made—a big mistake. Now send sonny in."

Nat sat with her a long time. It was the afternoon, and the household of the ranch were assembled in the kitchen, sitting round the lighted stove, as Western folk will do in the hottest weather, gossiping.

The doctor was there with Dan Sheldford and Mrs. Mixer and the good lady of the ranch, who, in hospitable Western fashion, made nothing of this upset to all her family arrangements. In the room next to Nan's, furnished with some pretense to elegance, and therefore rigorously avoided by its owners except on Sunday, Maizie sat alone, darning her father's socks.

While her fingers flew busily her thoughts swung like a pendulum from those words of Nan's to that time when Nat had spoken to her about his love—and she had, as she thought, answered so judiciously.

What was she to think now? Maizie knitted her brows, and thought hard for the space of half an hour. At the end of that time she heard the sound of an opening door, and Nat came into the room.

"How is she?"

"Sinking fast."

Maizie set her work aside, and as she rose, Shep, who was lying at her feet, rose too; and leaning lovingly against her looked at his master, and slowly wagged his tail.

"I must go to her," Maizie said.

"Not yet."

She looked up and tried to speak; but no words came. He took her hands and laid them on his breast.

"Maizie, is there any hope for me?"

Her lips trembled, and she smiled, but still she did not speak. Slowly then, but very tenderly, Nat's arm closed round her, and he took his answer from her lips.

A sound came from the other room, a faint voice calling Nat by name. He answered and went in, holding Maizie by the hand.

Nan was breathing with difficulty. Her face was drawn and gray with the shadow of approaching death, but when she saw Nat and Maizie she feebly held out her hands.

"So all is right," she whispered faintly. "Kiss me, sonny. Maizie, little one"—she gasped for breath, and in her eyes there was an imploring look which the girl could not understand at first—"I was bad, oh, I was wicked—if you can forgive—tell me, before God, with your hand in sonny's. Can you—can you forgive me what I might have done?"

Maizie dropped on her knees and kissed the anxious face..

"I forgive it all. God bless you."

Nan sighed, and the deep furrows in her forehead smoothed themselves away. Her eyes closed, the clasp of her hand upon Nat's relaxed, and without a struggle or a pang she passed peacefully away.

CHAPTER XVII.

JEFF TAKES ADVICE.

When Mixer returned from Amenta, it was found that Nan left a will with him, leaving all she possessed to Nat—a sum not far short of twenty thousand

dollars. This money, however, Nat, with Maizie's full consent, refused to take, and after much discussion he induced Mixer to divide it among the families of those who had lost their husbands and sons in the battle of Amenta.

The news of the engagement of Nat and Maizie was received by their friends, with two exceptions, with the complacency and smiling patronage of people who had known what was going to happen all the time, and were surprised that it had not happened before. The exceptions were Bel and Jeff. Bel embraced her sister rapturously.

"Oh, Maizie, that is just *right*. I'm delighted, darling—and as for Nat, he deserves even you. Mr. Collingwood says he is the bravest man he ever saw in his life."

Something in the tone in which Bel said these last words struck Maizie—her wits sharpened by her own experience—and the last little lingering doubt as to the reality of Bel's delight in her engagement was at once removed. A long and confidential chat between the sisters ensued. Some hours later Nat received Jeff's congratulations.

"I don't know how to put the words," said good-hearted Jeff. "The best has happened, and you sure deserve it. So good luck to your happiness, old boy, and hers."

He shook hands, and then with a sudden half-sigh turned away. Nat laid a hand upon his arm. "And how about yourself?"

Jeff laughed a joyless laugh. "Me? Happiness is not in my way at present."

"Jeff," Nat said, after a moment's pause, "I am going to ask a question. It is not a fair one, and you may feel it interfering. If so, dry me up. Has it ever occurred to you—say before the Amenta raid—that happiness might be in your way?"

Jeff nodded, but did not speak.

"What has put you off?"

"Mixer."

"What was his argument?"

"Want of money. Mind you, Mixer's right. He did not put me off the

track entirely. But he talked—well, common sense. At least, I guess so. But, some way, p'raps because I'm rather beaten down by the little frizzling I got, and the fighting, it seems rather hard. However, I promised. So there is no more to be said, only I'm not going to stay round here long. I could not stand it."

"What promise did you give?"

"That I would not speak to—to her, nor look her way again, till I had put by a pile—say two thousand dollars at least. Now that, to me, is a big sum, and will take me years to make. Meanwhile, she—Bel—you guess who it is, so I may say her name, what will she think? That is what bothers me so bad. If she cares, she won't like it. If she don't care, well, hadn't I better know? But, there, why do I talk foolishness? Mixer must be right. I know he is, and I will go away. I believe I'll go to-night. Could you make excuses for me, Nat?"

"Have you ever spoken to Dan?"

Jeff grinned. "Need you ask? Would you, if you had not a cent, care to face that man on such a point? I should be afraid he might have a fit, or give me one. No, I have not spoken to Dan."

"He is her father," observed Nat, in a reflective tone. "Mixer is not. Are you afraid of him?"

Jeff drew himself up.

"If that is your idea, I'll go at once. Afraid! Ten Dan Shelfords, each meaner than the one before, would not scare me. I'll speak to him to-night, before I go. Thank you for the hint."

"Well," Nat rejoined gravely, "don't let me advise; but if you feel that way I would certainly speak, only not before sundown. And as to your departure—put that off till to-morrow."

After a little further talk, this was agreed to, and the friends parted.

How Jeff got through the rest of the day he never could remember. Carry it off as he might before Nat, he was, in truth, horribly afraid of Dan Shelford—when it came to the point of asking his consent to the paying of ad-

dresses to Bel. Then Zeke would not at all approve. Yet, as Nat had said, Dan was her father, and, after all, things could not be worse than they were at present. Anyhow, he had said he would do it, and do it he must. Jeff waited until Dan had supped, and then bruskiy invited him to the saloon, and called for drinks.

"You won't care to hear what I have to tell, Mr. Shelford," began Jeff hurriedly. "But I reckon to speak, and chance it. I—I had the good fortune a little bit ago to brush up against road-agents near Las Animas. It happened that in the coach besides me were—were other folk, and among them your daughter, Miss Bel."

Jeff stopped here, and drew a mighty breath. Dan said nothing, and Jeff fancied he was very grim.

"We—we squelched those road-agents, and became, all of us, kind of intimate and friendly."

"So I heard," said Dan very dryly.

Jeff got desperate.

"Afterward I rode down to Chico Springs, and was at Mixer's. So was Miss Bel—and then—well—I felt *everything* for her—and so I do now—and that's what I wanted to say. She is your daughter, and I felt you ought to know it. Now, what I want to know is, what do you think of it? Will you let me speak to her? Or will you shut right down on me because I'm poor?"

For a few minutes no reply came at all. Then Dan said slowly:

"You have not, I presume, spoken of this to Bel?"

"No."

"That," Dan went on, "was fair, for she is young. You want my ideas. I'll give them. First, marriage when there ain't plenty to fill the pot even in a bad year is nothing less than misery. You are poor, you say. Then you can't marry—yet. Second, a young girl like Bel, eighteen come next January, don't know nothing of men. She thinks she does, but she don't. Now, with these points made clear, how do we stand?

Kind of far away, I guess. But that ain't all in this case. For there are circumstances which I may call pe-cooliar. A man spoke to me of you this afternoon"—Jeff gave a perceptible start—"I see you know his name. He did not say much. He ain't one who does, but I know, by experience, that he means more than most. It happens that I owe him something. The only man I do owe a cent to in all this world. I ain't going to tell you what he said. But I would like to know this: if a man—it might be me—made you an offer of partnership in stock, would you settle in this country once for all; drive in your stakes to stay, and work year in year out, steady and straight and true? Would you do all that, Jefferson Collingwood?"

Jeff gasped, and the railing of the balcony on which he leaned shook again. What did this incomprehensible little man mean, with his keen, dry face, and sharp eyes peering up under his hat-brim, and his words of hope and good cheer?

"Is—this—business?" Jeff panted at last.

"That depends on you."

"Then I say yes—*yes*, a hundred times. Why, that is all I want. Give me such a start as that, and I would not be poor for long if hard work counts for anything."

"Yet you have not stuck, so far," said Dan. "You have been most everywhere and settled nowheres. Isn't that so?"

"You are right," Jeff replied humbly; "quite right. But I never had anything to stay for. Now? But there is one thing yet. If some one—God bless him, whoever he is—be ready to give me a start, how about your daughter? May I—will she—what?"

Dan smiled, a dry, caustic smile, yet if his face could look benevolent I think it must have done so as he said, patting his tall companion gently on the shoulder:

"That—my good Jefferson—I rather guess you had better find out yourself."

A Chat With You

DID you ever learn to swim by the old primeval method? The method consists in being thrown bodily into deep water. There are good points to this system. If exciting, it is also effective. Within ten minutes, without any expense for a teacher, the pupil masters the rudiments of a useful art which many acquire only after months of effort and which the great majority of mankind never master at all.



WE have just had an experience of a similar nature. During the past season we had brought THE POPULAR to a higher standard than ever before. Then we took the plunge. We did it with our eyes open, and we were not pushed into the water, but still it was a plunge. We went on record as promising our readers that we could continue to improve THE POPULAR—that each successive number of the magazine for the coming year would be better than the one that preceded it. A great many people who know something about the magazine world from the inside told us that we had done a foolish thing when we made that promise. They said that we had promised an impossibility, that THE POPULAR was so good at that time as to be unsusceptible of improvement. Many of our readers wrote to the same effect. We disagreed with them and *were* going to improve it. We

were not quite sure how we were going to do it; we were sure, however, that it would be improved somehow.



THE man who has been thrown into deep water from a boat lives at a very high rate of speed for the first few moments. During the past month or so we have been acquiring experiences at a similar rate. We learned several facts. One of them is important—the fact that we *can* improve THE POPULAR. We are sure of it now. The time has come when we can redeem our promises and deliver the goods. The present number is a proof of that fact; but we haven't time to talk about it now. You have it in your hands at the present moment, and can judge for yourself. We are not afraid of your judgment.



TO begin with the complete novel in next month's issue. It is one of the best pieces of adventure fiction that has been written in years. Bailey Millard, the author, is new to the readers of THE POPULAR. He is a Californian, and for many years he was editor of the San Francisco *Examiner*. The United States has no place so filled with the possibilities of romance and adventure as the coast of California, where East meets West, where fortunes have been

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

made or lost in a day, and where the flotsam and jetsam of a whole world of mystery and marvels drift together at the Golden Gate. Bret Harte realized this a generation ago and brought the realization home to the reading public of his generation. No one knows the Western coast better than Mr. Millard. He knows of it at first-hand, having spent his youth there, and he makes us know it in his novel, "The Difficult Islands," a story in which a millionaire and his pretty daughter, a young San Francisco electrician, and a gang of barbarous Chinese pearl-divers play their parts in a drama as exciting as we have read in many a day.



WE have another new writer who makes his bow to the readers of *THE POPULAR MAGAZINE* in next month's issue. This is Francis Whitlock, whose new series of stories, "Tales of the Lost Legion," starts next month. The members of the "Lost Legion" are gentlemen adventurers, soldiers of fortune, whose wanderings in out-of-the-way corners of the earth have led them into strange circumstances and stranger adventures. The first of the series, "An Echo of the Spanish Inquisition," is a story of South America—different from and far more interesting than the ordinary South American story. You will find in these "Tales of the Lost Legion" fiction with a distinct flavor of its own, totally unlike anything that you have read in the past.

W. B. M. FERGUSON is well and favorably known to the readers of *THE POPULAR*. "Garrison's Finish," his racing story which is now selling in big editions in book form, introduced him to you, and the series of stories, "Strange Cases of a Medical Free-lance," now appearing, firmly established the friendship. Next month we will publish the first instalment of a novel, "Zollenstein," which will appear serially in *THE POPULAR*. Mr. Ferguson has put the best part of a year's work in this story. It is one of the strongest serials we have read in some time, and is a tale of action and romance. We will not risk spoiling your pleasure in it in the slightest degree by telling you more about it.



NEXT month you will read a funny baseball story by Martin A. Flavin, entitled "Kallico Dick and His Cactus Bat." There is a strong story of a professional foot-racer by H. R. Durant, who is well known by his athletic stories in other magazines, but is a newcomer to *THE POPULAR* staff. Charles K. Moser contributes a vigorous Western story, "The One-lunger," and C. S. Pearson a racing story, "The Outsider."



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It is the result of two years' continuous and costly research by able steel metallurgists.

It is of the finest iron and the iron is converted into steel according to a new high carbon Gillette formula by the most skillful steel makers in the steel business. The layman will more readily understand the fineness of this new blade steel when it is explained that it costs 9 times the price paid for strop razor steel.

And these new blades are tempered by an improved, automatic, tempering method, which hardens them, not superficially but from side to side, from end to end, from surface to bottom, and hardens them to a degree of hardness only 20% less hard than the hardest known substance—the diamond—and brittles them to almost the brittleness of glass (break one), and distributes the hardness and brittleness so evenly and so uniformly that the blades are equally hard and equally brittle at every point. This unusual hardness and brittleness are due partially to the paper thinness of the blade (6-1000ths of an inch), as the thinner the blade the harder it can be tempered. This paper thin blade is an exclusive Gillette patent found in no other razor.

Then the sharp edges of the new blade are put on by automatic sharpening machines. Other razors boast of hand sharpening. Bottomless boast! Hands are weak, trembly, inaccurate, get tired, vary. But the Gillette grinding, honing, and stropping machines used on this new blade are powerful, steady, exact, tireless, uniform—hence work on a nearly unvarying edge and a much truer and keener edge than the old-fashioned hand-sharpened strop razor edge to which you are probably accustomed.

And these new (1907 Make) blades are expertly tested for seven defects and must split a hanging human hair before they're enveloped and sealed in damp-proof paper from factory to you with this inspector's ticket enclosed: "Should any blades in this package prove unsatisfactory, return them by mail with this ticket and explicit criticism."

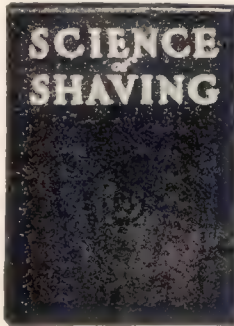
In next month's ads. we'll explain why the new (1907 Make) blades are uniform and the same in hardness and keenness.

If you're not a Gillette user you ought to get one on thirty days' free trial and give it a thorough test. Most dealers make this offer. If yours doesn't, we will. It will prove itself. Costs about 2 cents per shave, first year and about 1/4 of a cent per shave subsequent years for blades.

Triple silver plated set with 12 blades \$5.00. Extra Blades 10 for 50 cents.

Gillette Razors and Blades sold by Drug, Cutlery and Hardware dealers everywhere.

GILLETTE SALES COMPANY,
288 Times Building, • • New York



Send for this book to-day.
It is being read by thousands now and has gone through three editions in sixty days. It is worth its weight in gold to any man who doesn't wear a beard. A postal will bring you a copy, prepaid.

Gillette Safety Razor

NO STROPPING, NO HONING

Pabst Extract

The Best Tonic



For the Overworked

Work and worry of a business life, the cares of house and the strain of society, tend to lessen the vitality of men and women, often bringing about a state of collapse. You are not sick, but nature has been overtaxed; your sleep does not refresh, your energy is lacking and you have lost your grip on the good things in life. These are the warnings—the system must be strengthened. At this critical time, the remedy is

Pabst Extract

The Best Tonic

Being an extract of rich barley malt and choicest hops, it not only furnishes nourishment in predigested form, but acts as a tonic, giving you a desire for food and furnishing your system the power to draw quicker, better and greater energy from what you eat. The gentle, soothing effect of the hops restores your nerves to their normal state, causing peaceful and refreshing sleep, strengthening the brain and giving new life to the tired muscles.

Pabst Extract

The Best Tonic

Will strengthen the weak and overworked. Will produce sleep. Will build up and feed the nerves. Will conquer dyspepsia. Will help recovery from sickness. Will assist nursing mothers.

Guaranteed under the National Pure Food Law.
U. S. Serial No. 1921.

Booklet and picture entitled "Baby's First Adventure" sent free on request.

Pabst Extract Dept. "B 1" Milwaukee, Wis.

25c at all Druggists
Insist Upon the Original

Newark, N. J.
I have used "The Best Tonic" to good advantage. It is an excellent article easily assimilated and well tolerated. Promotes appetite and sleep and will prove a great help in many cases.
C. F. Starkweather, M. D.

Let Me Prove That 10 Acres of this Irrigated Land

Can **\$250.00** A
earn **\$250.00** Month For You



E. W. SHUTT, President
Rio Grande Land, Water & Power Co.

I Will Sell It To You For \$2.50 a Week

Irrigated, under
cultivation, ready
to earn at least
\$250 a month

Not in all the world have I
ever heard of so good an op-
portunity for men of small
means.

In this small space I cannot
tell you all the steps that have
been taken to safeguard your
money in every way.

This is investment—not specu-
lation—yet you get returns equal to those
from successful speculation.

And all the while you are secured against
loss by the finest farm land in the world,
and your interest in water rights that no
man could buy for a million dollars.

There is no question like finding gold or
striking oil about this proposition.
The land is there for all time.

The water is there for all time to nourish
and fertilize it.

You don't have to dig in the ground deeper
than to plant seed.

There are no insects that destroy crops in this
country.

There is no chance for drought.

There is no chance known to man for a single
crop failure, ever.

And the abundant crops of large and in every other
way superior hays, grains, vegetables and fruits are
equalled in only a very few favored spots, such as the
Rocky Ford country. But I am going to prove by case
after case that ten acres of this property can be made
to net you \$3,000 to \$10,000 a year, according to the
kind of crops grown.

The difference is not according to location of land or
season or anything of the kind.

The land is near a prosperous and growing city—
Albuquerque—the largest city in New Mexico.

Our main irrigation canal to run through the city.

The main line of the Santa Fe Railroad runs through
our land from end to end.

And our own electric line is to supply additional cheap
and convenient transportation to every section of these
lands.

If you want to see the country for yourself, you can go
with the next party I take to look at the property. Or you
and your friends can band together and send a repre-
sentative.

Or I will send you names of prominent men who have gone
r will go and you can ask them what conditions they find.
But this is the merest outline of what I will show you in
detail.

There are many features of this Secured Land Contract
that make it safe and profitable which I haven't space to
touch upon.

I am only attempting to make it clear to you that if you can
possibly save \$2.50 a week you can buy land that can be made
to net you a three to ten thousand dollar income in a few years.

Don't doubt—I have proof.

I have promised to lay it before you. All you have to do is to
write for it—that can't cost you a cent more than postage.

And as fast as the mails can carry, I will send you proof that
as sure as crops grow where climate, soil and water conditions
are perfect, you can be financially independent in a few years.

Now, not to hurry your decision in the least, but to protect the price,
write me personally at once.

For after the first lot of ten acre tracts is contracted for we will ask more.
But I make this promise. Every man or woman who answers this advertise-
ment at once can have at least ten acres on these terms unless, of course, all
our land should be already contracted for from this one advertisement.

Now, write at once. I can say nothing more in this advertisement except
that, if I could, I would not tell you all you can confidently expect from this
investment. For you would not believe it without the proof which I cannot
put in an advertisement. Address me personally, and believe me sincerely,

E. W. SHUTT, President Rio Grande Land, Water and Power Co.
683 Houser Building, ST. LOUIS, MO.

YOU know, or can easily learn from United States
Government Reports, that irrigated lands in the
Great Southwest, in selected crops, are made to
net \$300 to \$1,000 a year per acre over and above
the entire cost of cultivating them.

Anyone who knows the country will tell you that
absolutely the surest, safest way in the world to gain
a large and permanent income for a small
outlay is to get hold of a few acres of irriga-
ted land in the Great Southwest.

But always before it has required at least
a few hundred dollars and it has been necessary for
the investor to live on the land and develop it.

Now, my company makes it possible for you to
get ten acres of the finest irrigated land in the
world if you can save \$2.50 a week.

You can go and live on it—absolutely assured that
it can be made to earn \$3,000 to \$10,000 every year
without fail.

Or you can remain in your present position and
add almost that much to what you earn.

For my company will cultivate your property for
a small share of the crops.

You don't have to know a thing in the world
about farming.

Now, I can and will prove all this from the
highest authorities in the land.

All you have to do is—write me and say,
"Prove to me that ten acres of your land can
be made to net from \$3,000 to \$10,000 a year above
all cost of cultivating it."

I have the proof, so read what my company
will do for you.

I will deliver to you at once a Secured Land
Contract for ten acres of irrigated land
in the Rio Grande Valley.

You must pay my company \$2.50 a week
or as much more as you like.

Instead of your having to pay interest
on deferred payments, I agree, for my
company, to pay you 5% per annum on
the money you pay in.

I also bind my company to fully irrigate
your land and turn it over to you under
full cultivation whenever you
desire to mature your contract.

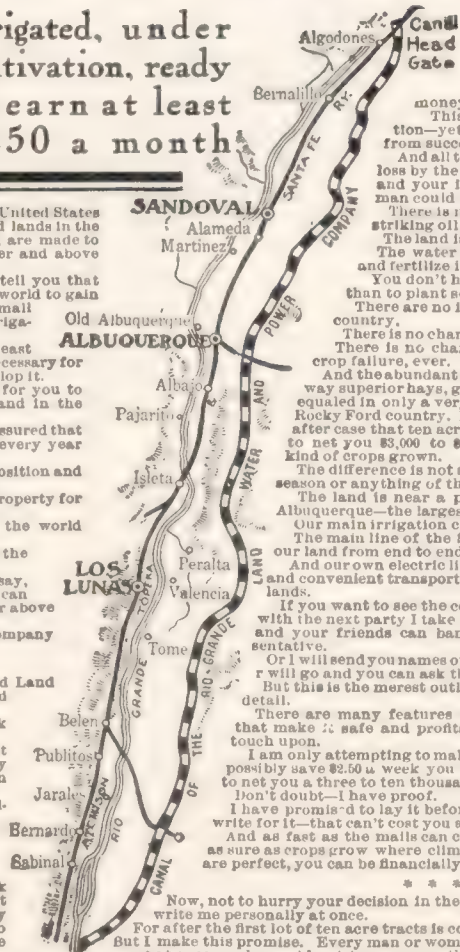
\$2.50 a week will mature your con-
tract in 10 years.

But after you have paid \$2.50 a week
for three years, or the same total amount
in a shorter time, I agree and bind my
company to lend you enough money to
make all future payments and mature
your contract.

Remember, the land will be fully irrigated and
completely under cultivation, so your first year's
crop should net you enough over and above the cost
of cultivating it to fully pay your loan.

You would then own land outright that can be
made to net you \$3,000 to \$10,000 a year.

Can you hope in any other way as safe and sure as
this to have so large an income in a few years?



The Cheer of the Man Who **WINS**

The man who wins a good position and a high salary is entitled to cheer.

He has accomplished something worth while—and yet it's really easy. First, because there are more good positions than there are trained men to fill them—second, because any man, no matter who he is or how lowly his present position, can acquire in a short time and without sacrifice just the exact training necessary to win in any line of work he selects.

This has been made possible by the enormous resources, the unlimited facilities of the **International Correspondence Schools**—an institution of 16 years' standing, supported by \$6,000,000 capital, conducted for the sole purpose of training poorly-paid men to earn higher salaries.

During February, 344 students voluntarily reported an increase in salary and position as the direct result of I. C. S. training.

In a nutshell, if you have an ounce of ambition, the **I. C. S.** will help you win. If you have enough honest curiosity to want to know how the **I. C. S.** will, at its own expense, take up your case personally and explain every detail to you without asking you for one cent, unless you decide to go on. All you have to do is to mail the enclosed coupon, marking it as directed, so that it may have the intelligent consideration of the men who help other men to win.

Mail the Coupon To-Day.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

Box 855 Scranton, Pa.

Please explain, without further obligation on my part, how I can qualify for a larger salary in the position before which I have marked X

Bookkeeper
Stenographer
Advertisement Writer
Show Card Writer
Window Trimmer
Commercial Law
Illustrator
Civil Service
Chemist
Textile Mill Supt.
Electrician
Electrical Engineer

Mechanical Draftsman
Telephone Engineer
Elec. Lighting Supt.
Mechanical Engineer
Surveyor
Stationary Engineer
Civil Engineer
Building Contractor
Architect's Draftsman
Architect
Bridge Engineer
Structural Engineer
Mining Engineer

Name _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____



AINSLEE'S

FOR MAY

"The Magazine That Entertains"

The remarkable serial story, "*Her Son*," by HORACE A. VACHELL, will reach its fourth instalment in the May number of AINSLEE'S. Those who have followed it from the beginning and have finished reading the chapters contained in the current number, have found that the narrative has reached a stage of the most intense interest and will be easily convinced that the publishers exaggerated nothing in their preliminary announcements.

The opinion of readers that it is a very great story is unanimous.

The novelette in the May number will be an exceedingly fine mystery tale called "*The Blotting Book*," by E. F. BENSON.

Besides these special features there will be a list of short stories by ELIZABETH DUER, ROY NORTON, GERTRUDE LYNCH, MARY H. VORSE, WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT, JOHNSON MORTON and BROUGHTON BRANDENBURG.

Another special and very interesting feature will be an article by the celebrated violinist, MARIE HALL, giving some of her personal reminiscences and experiences.

Price, per copy, 15c. Subscription \$1.80 a Year

AINSLEE MAGAZINE COMPANY, NEW YORK

The World Takes Off Its Hat to Oliver Number 5



The World loves a Winner.

Here's one that won over every typewriter under the sun.

It's the new Oliver No. 5.

Hats off to the victorious Oliver!

The new Oliver is the first to reach the goal of typewriter perfection.

While other typewriter makers rested on their laurels, the Oliver Typewriter Company's corps of mechanical experts were bending

every energy to the task of making a new world's record.

The splendid result, the wonderful new Oliver Model No. 5, represents the highest achievement of typewriter invention.

Speed possibilities have been vastly increased. Time and labor-saving features hitherto unknown have been perfected. Years of durability have been added.

Simplicity has been reduced to its lowest terms.

Efficiency has reached its utmost limits.

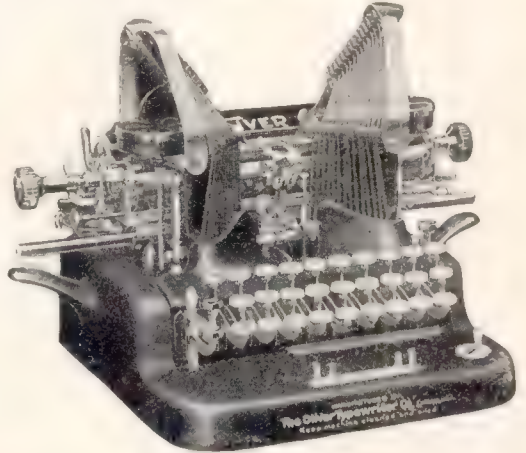
Not until Oliver Model No. 5 was absolutely perfect down to the minutest detail—not until we were fully prepared by increasing our factory capacity to meet the enormous demand for it—was news of the coming wonder permitted to reach the outside world.

This is the first public announcement of Oliver Model No. 5, and it will go down in history as marking a new epoch in the typewriter industry.

It is impossible in the limited space of this announcement to adequately describe the new machine. A brief resume of its commanding advantages must suffice.

The Oliver Disappearing Indicator is the only device on any typewriter for indicating the exact visible printing point at time of stroke.

The Oliver Balance Shift Mechanism gives the new model a fifty per cent advantage over all other shift key machines.



The Oliver Line Ruling Device, the Oliver Non-Vibrating Base, the Oliver Automatic Paper Feed, and scores of additional improvements that make for accuracy and speed, are found on Model No. 5 and *nowhere else.*

Every employer, every operator, every business executive interested in raising the standard of efficiency in all departments, should write for catalogue giving full details of this wonderful typewriter.

Extra Men Wanted At Once!

Unprecedented demand for the new model necessitates the employment of extra salesmen **immediately.**

Good salaries and permanent positions to men of character and ability. We train our men **FREE** in The Oliver School of Practical Salesmanship. Address at once,

The Oliver Typewriter Company, 145 Wabash Ave., Chicago

The Red-Blood Man

The man who believes in the green fields, the charm of the silvery stream,
in the soothing influences of the lofty peaks; who believes
in *all* clean, healthful, outdoor life, is the
man to whom RECREATION will
appeal with a force that
is irresistible.

RECREATION

Devoted

to all that is best in

Hunting, Fishing, Motor-

ing, Boating, Golfing, and to all other

recreation that means red blood. Printed wholly on

coated paper, pages 10 x 14 inches, with authoritative and attractive text and illustrations. There are more than 100 fine pictures in the April number. Yearly, \$2.00; usually 15 cents a copy, but 25 cents a copy for double numbers.

A Few of the Good Things in April Recreation

A remarkable article on **TARPON FISHING** by **Charles Frederick Holder**, one of the best authorities and most interesting writers of the age.

ON A MOUNTAIN COW RANCH, by **Edwin L. Sabin**.

SALT WATER FISHING, by **John Harrington Keene**, who knows the subject thoroughly.

MOTORING IN OLD FLANDERS, an article of immense value to automobilists written by **Henry W. Wack**, who toured the section he writes about.

Then there are a dozen or more other articles on every phase of clean outdoor life and recreation. You can only appreciate April Recreation after seeing it.

THE KENNEL is taken care of by **James Watson**, who knows more about dogs than any other man in America.

RACING SMALL YACHTS ON THE PACIFIC, by **Allen Henry Wright**.

THE TIRE PROBLEM OF THE AUTOMOBILIST, by **Hiram P. Maxim**.

AMERICA, THE NATION OF MARKSMEN, by **Annie Oakley**.

DIFFERENT DEGREES OF DUCK HUNTING, by **Charles H. Morton**.

A SPLENDID COMBINATION OFFER

By special arrangements with the publishers of **Burr McIntosh Monthly**, which is described on the opposite page, we are able to make the really remarkable subscription offer of one full year's subscription to that magazine (\$3.00) and one full year's subscription to Recreation (\$2.00), **both for only \$3.50**, regular price, \$5.00. The magazines may go to different addresses if desired, anywhere in the United States, Cuba, Porto Rico or Mexico. Foreign postage, including Canada, on *each* magazine, \$1.00 extra.

Just to Get Acquainted

We will send you RECREATION each month for eight months, April to November, 1907, inclusive, for just \$1.00, and, if you don't like the April number when you get it, tell us so, and we will return your dollar. If you want to examine RECREATION before accepting this offer, buy the April number of your newsdealer, or send 15 cents to us for it.

Address RECREATION, C-4 West 22d Street, New York

Why You Ought to Know The Burr McIntosh Monthly

It is the magazine that is different and is conceded to be the most beautiful magazine in the world.

It is essentially a magazine that appeals to people of refinement and culture, to people who appreciate the best in fine illustrations presented in an unusual manner.

SUPERB WORKS OF ART IN EVERY NUMBER

Each issue contains a number of artistic subjects printed on heavy plate paper, in **splendid color effects**, and inserted at intervals throughout the magazine. In addition to these special subjects in colors, there is an art supplement devoted to the reproduction of the best works of the old masters, or of modern artists, the subject of the April supplement being work from the Photo-Secession. This portion is always printed in an art tone ink of special shade, producing a result that experts term "remarkable."

The balance of the magazine is printed in **septa double tone inks** on fine enamel paper in the highest perfection of the printer's art. The entire magazine is bound with silk cord of a color harmonizing with the color scheme of the cover.

EVERY PICTURE IS WORTHY A FRAME

and YOU will find more than enough choice pictures in every number of the Burr McIntosh Monthly to add a charm to any room in your home by framing them in our exquisite and dainty frames of Japanese Wood Veneer. Read carefully our offer No. 1 below which gives you an opportunity to try these frames without cost to you for the frames.

OUR ANNIVERSARY NUMBER, APRIL, 1907

Celebrating the beginning of the fifth year of the BURR MCINTOSH MONTHLY, the April number (just published) is unusually attractive. The cover design, shown above in miniature, is from the painting "The Mirror," by the celebrated artist Mr. George R. Barse, Jr., member of the National Academy of Design and other societies of famous artists. It is reproduced with faithful accuracy and is a striking work of art.

A PLEA FOR THE PHILIPPINES. By Burr McIntosh

A feature of the literary portion of the April number is an interesting article by Mr. McIntosh, being a candid opinion of the present conditions in our Eastern possessions. Mr. McIntosh accompanied Secretary Taft on his trip to the Orient as staff photographer, and his interesting story will be illustrated by heretofore unpublished photographs.

In addition to the special features mentioned, the April number contains a wealth of exquisite portraits of celebrities and unusual landscapes and several literary features of more than ordinary interest.

THREE SPECIAL AND VERY LIBERAL OFFERS

No. 1.—The Burr McIntosh Monthly is 25 cents a copy, except the double Christmas numbers, which are always 50 cents a copy. If you will send us \$3.00 to the address below for a twelve months' subscription to begin with the April number, we will send you **free** the March, 1907, number, the double Christmas, 1906, number, and six of our Japanese Wood Veneer frames, value \$4.35.

No. 2.—By special arrangement with the publishers of Recreation, which is described on the opposite page, we are able to offer one full year subscription to that magazine (\$2.00) and one full year subscription to Burr McIntosh Monthly (\$3.00) BOTH for only \$1.50, value \$5.00. The magazines may go to different addresses anywhere in the United States if desired.

No. 3. If you prefer to know a little more about the Burr McIntosh Monthly before subscribing for a full year send us \$1.00 and we will send you the March, April, May, June, July, 1907, numbers and the Christmas, 1906, number, value \$1.75.

Should you wish to examine The Burr McIntosh Monthly before accepting this offer, buy the April number of your newsdealer or, if he is out of it, send 25 cents to us for it. It is a purchase you will never regret.

BURR PUBLISHING COMPANY, C-4 West 22d Street, New York





**A SINGLE TRIAL
WILL CONVINCE
YOU BETTER
THAN OUR
WORDS OF
PRAISE AS
TO THE MANY POINTS OF MERIT WHICH OUR
FAMOUS LINE OF MEN'S
SOCKS ARE MOST HON-
ORABLY ENTITLED TO AND
HAVE.**

Shawknit
TRADE MARK.

SOCKS

The STANDARD for nearly thirty years
always stamped on toe this mark *Shawknit*

SOLD BY DEALERS If not procurable from yours let us send you 6 assorted pairs on trial: 6 pairs for \$1.50, delivery charges paid to any part of U. S. upon receipt of price, or 25c. per single pair.

<p>Style 19a9 — Famous Snowblack, will not crock or fade. " 3S8 — Rich Navy Blue. " 5P1 — Pure White Inside, Black and White Clerical Mixture Outside. " D9 — Navy Blue Ground with Fine Bleached White Hair Line Stripes. " 19F 20 — Black Ground with Neat Embroidered Figures in Cardinal Silks. " 38F 30 — Navy Blue Ground with Neat Embroidered Figures in Light Blue Silks.</p>	<p>When you order direct, state size</p>
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Our free catalogue cost us a whole lot of money and we want you to have one. It is very attractive and useful. Beautifully colored and replete with styles, prices, and information. Your name on a postal will bring it.

SHAW STOCKING CO., **131 Shaw St., Lowell, Mass.**



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4 In Brilliant Colors 50c

Size 9x12

Dainty and attractive reproductions by the most popular Poster artist in the U. S.
 Here is a girl after your own heart, pretty of face and handsome of form, lovable, daring and with the style that has made the American girl the queen of the earth. We have selected a complete set of eight of these superb creations and reproduced them in exact duplicates of the originals. They are printed on finest enameled art paper, size, 9x12, and reach you ready for the walls of your den or library.
 We send this set of four PREPAID, together with 50 miniature illustrations from our immense list of beautiful and attractive den pictures, ideal heads, and the





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FREE — Order the full set of eight at once and complimentary a dainty drawing by Ramsey, size, 9x12, entitled "The Summer Engagement."



24 COMPLETE NOVELS, NOVELETTES and STORIES FREE

If you will send us the names and addresses of five friends, neighbors or acquaintances who like to read stories, we will send you, free and post-paid, to pay you for your trouble, Twenty-four Complete Novels, Novelettes and Stories by Famous Authors, as follows.

- Woven on Fate's Loom.** By Charles Garvice.
- In Daffodil Time.** By Effie Adelaide Rowlands.
- The Tide on the Moaning Bar.** By Frances Higson Burnett.
- The House in the Wood.** By Mrs. Jane G. Austin.
- Maggie Lee.** By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
- The Sapphire Circlet.** By Anna Katharine Green.
- A True Story.** By Mark Twain.
- The Parson of Jackman's Gulch.** By A. Conan Doyle.
- Hendleigh Hall.** By Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth.
- Huldah.** By Marion Harland.
- The Last of the Mountjoys.** By Mrs. May Agnes Fleming.
- Samantha in Washington.** By Josiah Allen's Wife.
- Elsie Latimer's Sacrifice.** By Amanda M. Douglas.
- The St. Hildie Diamonds.** By Emma Garrison Jones.
- Sold for Naught.** By Mrs. Amelia E. Barr.
- The Mystery of Calhoun Hall.** By Charlotte M. Braeme.
- The Twelve Wine-Glasses.** By Mrs. Mary J. Holmes.
- My Host at C.** By Anna Katharine Green.
- A Literary Nightmare.** By Mark Twain.
- Alabama Joe.** By A. Conan Doyle.
- Under the Laurels.** By Mrs. Alex. McVeigh Miller.
- Monica.** By "The Duchess."
- The Mummy's Curse.** By Louisa M. Alcott.
- The Bar Lighthouse.** By Mary E. Wilkins.

Please bear in mind that this entire collection of twenty-four complete novels, novelettes and stories by famous authors will cost you nothing; it is given free to pay you for your trouble in sending us the names and addresses of five story readers. Do not send more than the five names, as not more than one collection of the novels, novelettes and stories will be sent to a single address; and please send the names from five different families—not more than one from each family. Address
E. M. LUPTON, Publisher, 25 City Hall Place, New York.

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Send us your poems today.
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A miniature Telephone for the Ear—invisible, easily adjusted, and entirely comfortable. Makes low sounds and whispers plainly heard. Over fifty thousand sold, giving instant relief from deafness and head noises. There are but few cases of deafness that cannot be benefited.



Write for booklet and testimonials

THE MORLEY COMPANY, Dept. 76.

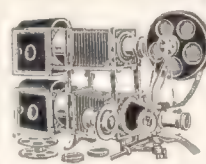
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ICENT IS ALL IT COSTS to write postal for our big **Free Bicycle** catalogue showing all models at lowest prices. **DO NOT BUY** a bicycle or a pair of tires until you learn our **marvelous new offers**. We ship on **approval** without a cent deposit, **prepay freight**, allow **10 Days Free Trial**—All our new and wonderful propositions with catalogues and much **valuable information** sent you **FREE** for the asking. **WE WILL CONVINCE** you that we sell a better bicycle for less money than any other house. Buy direct from the factory. If you want to **Make Money or Earn a Bicycle** write for our **Special Offer**. **Tires, Coaster-Brakes, built-up-wheels and all sundries** at **half** usual prices. **Do Not Wait**, but write us a postal today and learn everything. Write it now. **MEAD CYCLE CO. Dept. C-200 Chicago, Ill.**

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AMUSEMENT SUPPLY CO., 465 Chemical Bank Bldg., CHICAGO.



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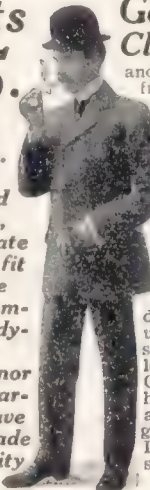
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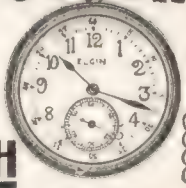
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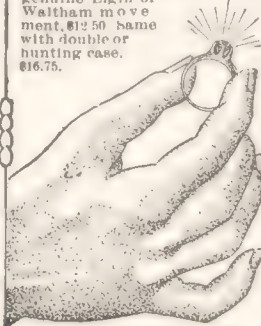
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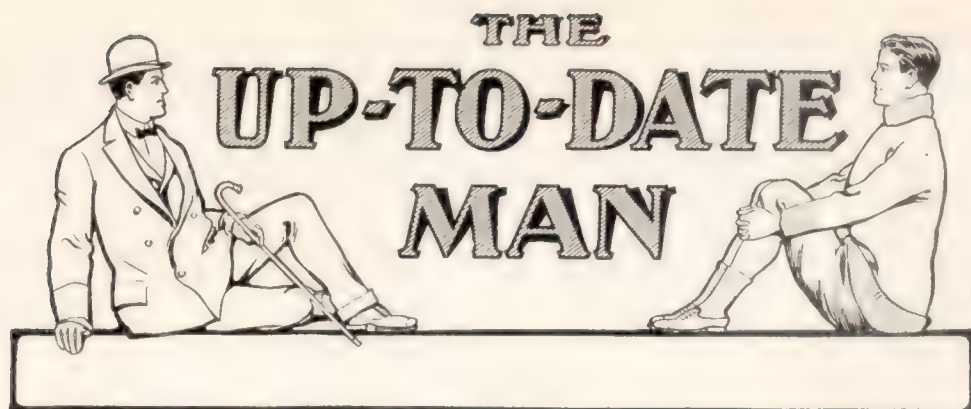
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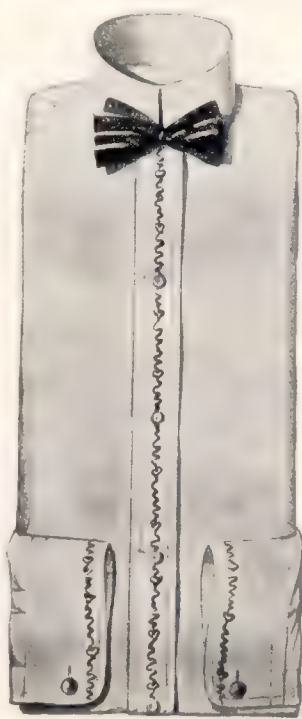
QUITE as important as the essentials of dress are the accessories. Often a tasteful tie, a pleasing shirt, a becoming hat, and well-fitting gloves and shoes redeem the effect of a mediocre suit. Indeed, men's clothes are so lacking in color and diversity, that one must turn to the little incidentals for a means of expressing personal taste and individual notions. Take, as an example, the correct colors in spring suits. One is restricted to brown, blue, green, gray, and black. Beyond these and allied shades it is impossible to go without doing violence to fashion and usage. But in shirts and ties, waistcoats and hose, one may indulge one's preferences without hindrance, mindful only of the fundamental principle frequently laid down in this department—becomingness to the individual. If a color, cut, or cloth does not suit a man, it is not fashionable, but foppish, to adopt it. If the man of sallow complexion wear a scarlet tie, and the man under normal height put on a suit of vociferous "checks," each is ill-dressed, no matter whether the mode declares scarlet to be "the" color in ties and checks to be the latest whisper in London clubs. True taste means making the most of such gifts of looks as na-

ture may have bestowed upon a man. It means becomingness of form, harmony of color, and symmetry of proportion. To look at ease, one must feel at ease. This is why fashion ordains that present-day clothes be half-loose and wholly comfortable. Tightly fitting garments are neither in season nor in reason. The muscles must have plenty of room to spread themselves. Athletics have made the younger generation of men intolerant of all foppishness in dress. Manliness is not only sensible, but fashionable today. It is almost a creed of the set which lives well and dresses well.

Taking up the accessories of dress—the fashionable spring suit was described last month—brighter colors and sprightlier patterns are noticeable. In shirts, pink, green, helio, purple, and blue in broad bars, plaids, and floral effects are indorsed by good form. Whether the shirt be plain or pleated is a question of preference, not propriety. The cuffs

are always attached. Separate cuffs breed the suspicion that a man is not scrupulous about changing his linen frequently.

The modish spring collar for morning and business wear is the turn-down or fold shape. It should meet closely



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in front, as the fashionable morning tie is narrow and tightly knotted. The front edges of the collar may be round or square, according to personal taste. Wing-collars will be generally worn with more formal dress, such as frock and cutaway suits, though they are not incorrect in place of the fold. If the wing be worn, the tie must be wide to lend a becoming effect. A wing-collar and a slim tie look ill-assorted. Ceremonious afternoon and evening dress requires the poke or lap-front collars. These belong altogether to formal occasions, and are never worn for business or lounging. The correct collar this season is stitched about a quarter of an inch from the edge. A London innovation is a collar with a faint colored pattern in the linen matching the pattern in the shirt. For example, if the shirt be blue, pink, or heliotrope in shade, blue, pink, or heliotrope lines are traced in a similar but much less conspicuous shade on the collar. This idea is, to be sure, an extreme one not likely to be generally adopted.

The smart tie for business will be narrow. Green, brown, and purple are colors much approved, though, of course, the selection of any particular color is purely a matter of personal choice. For the guidance of the precise mind which demands measurements, it may be said that the fashionable tie is from $1\frac{3}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide, and folded in, not sewn in the back. The folded-in tie seems a waste of material, and is more expensive than the sewed or reversible tie, but its very amplitude of material commends it to men of luxurious taste.

The newest ideas in tie patterns are university and regimental stripes, which are bold, contrasting stripes on dark grounds, such as black, blue, and fog gray. This is another "Lunnon" conception.

In harmony with the marked trend of fashion toward rational dress from the skin out, is the present widespread vogue of so-called "athletic" undergarments.

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ease and poise were the prime consid-
erations, and, finding them so delight-
fully comfortable, and so clearly sensi-
ble and befitting, he promptly adopted
them for daily use.

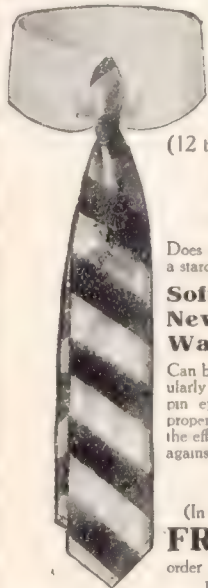
A man who has not worn athletic
underwear has never been really com-
fortable. A bold statement, perhaps,
but a true one. Tightly fitting long
underclothes are not only unhealthful,
but in all seasons and all climates un-
comfortable. They heat and bind, keep
the air from the skin, cause perspira-
tion, produce chafing, wrap the body in
a mantle of clammy discomfort which
many a wearer patiently endures, be-
cause he doesn't know any better, or is
prejudiced against all innovations in
dress, or both.

Fashion and sense alike cry out in
favor of underclothes suited to this
touch-and-go age, and to the exacting
tasks that we have to perform. Com-
fort of body has a lot to do with peace
of mind, with multiplying our capacity
to do things, with putting us in the
mood to do them with the least possible
hindrance and friction. Loosely fitting
outer clothes and tightly fitting under-
clothes are an absurdity, for real com-
fort begins at the skin, just as real
cleanliness begins there.

Another idea of the latter-day man is
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plowing or wriggling through, with its
accompaniments of wry faces, rasped
temper, and tousled hair is necessary.
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simple, sensible, suitable, and will ap-
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Knee-length drawers and coat-cut
undershirts are fashioned of such
filmy, summery fabrics as nainsook,
Egyptian plaids, Champagnette cloth,
and various other tropical materials of
gossamer airiness. They must, above
all, be loose-fitting, or they defeat the
primary object sought—comfort. Gar-
ments which are skimpy in cut and in-
securely put together are worse than
tight-fitting underwear, for they shrink
in washing, pucker up during wear, and
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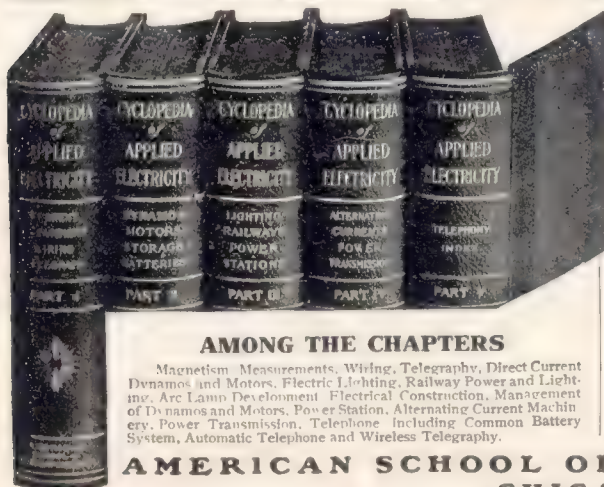
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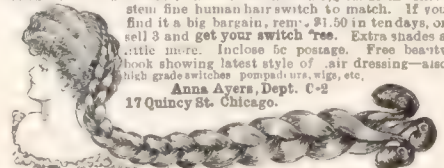
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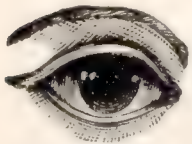
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FRANCIS WHITLOCK.

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These are three of the big features in the June POPULAR, but there are many others equally interesting. Of particular importance is Mr. A. W. Marchmont's great serial, **"The Man Who Was Dead,"** which reaches an amazing complication in this issue. If you haven't begun to read this story begin right away. It has a dash and vigor that will charm you. Then there are

A Dozen Rattling Good Short Stories

A story of sports, "His Need of Money," is contributed by H. R. Durant. There is a motor-boat story called "Out of the Depths," by William Ferguson. Martin A. Flavin has a **funny baseball yarn**, "Kallico Dick and His Cactus Bat." There is a vivid cowboy story, "The Unheavenly Twins," by B. M. Bower. C. S. Pearson, author of "Romances of the Race-Course," tells an exciting racing story, "The Outsider." "The Pass of the Mexican" is a story of Central America by K. and Hesketh Prichard, authors of "Don Q." T. Jenkins Hains, famous for his stirring novel, "The Black Barque," has a splendid sea yarn, "Journegan's Graft." "Jonah Number Two," is the fourth complete story in George Bronson-Howard's entertaining adventure series. "Plantagenet Hock: Hero." And you must not miss B. S. Kearns' laughable little sketch of a hustling advertiser who overstepped the mark; it is called "Bubble on the Brain."

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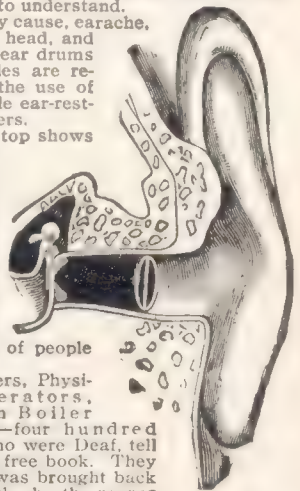
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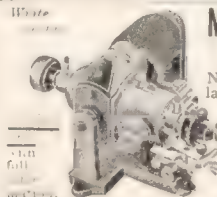
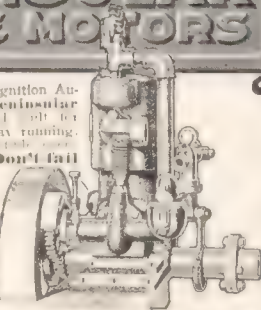
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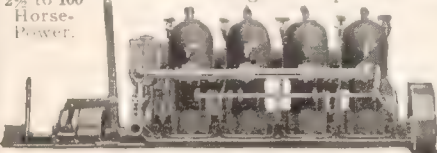


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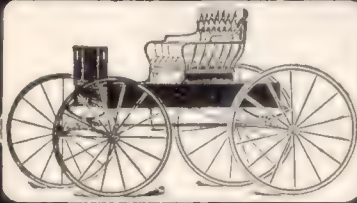
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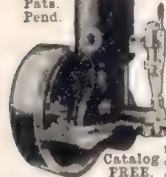
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Guaranteed under the Food and Drugs Act, June 30, 1906. Serial No. 1542

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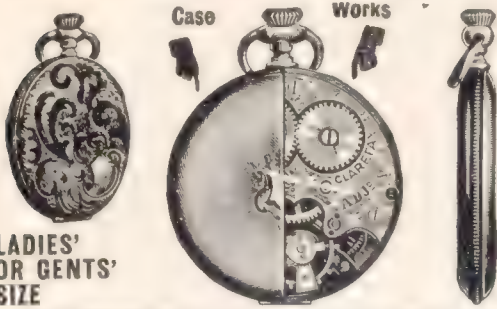
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Do not send money with order, but send us your name, post-office and nearest express office. Tell us whether you want a ladies' or gents' Clarefax watch, and we will send the watch to your express office, where you may examine it before paying any money, and after you are positive as to its value, pay the express agent \$5.40 and express charges.

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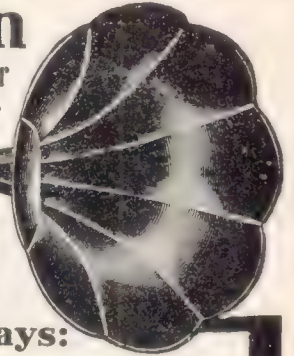
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The dealer who offers you a substitute for an article you have called by name and asked for, is in the same category as the flim-flammer and short change artist. All three are thieves, but the substitutor is the more dangerous, because he takes advantage of the confidence you have in him as your dealer.

Insist upon getting what you ask for—don't be flim-flammed.

Wash-Day Troubles Ended by a "Self-Working" Washer Use It a Month *FREE*

Send No Money.

We Pay the Freight



ANYTHING familiar about this picture?
Pleasant sight— isn't it?

Cook going on "short notice"—house-
maid refusing to stay "another minute,"
or, perhaps it's "the wash-lady," getting out
in a hurry and leaving part of the clothes in
the tub and the rest on the floor.

Do you find it hard to keep good servants
because of the troubles of wash-day?

Do you have to put your washing out, or
have a washwoman in, because your girl will
not do such work?

Do you have to keep a girl for no other
reason than that you are not strong enough to
do your own washings?

Do you depend on laundries?

If so, glance at the picture down on the
right, where the turning of a water faucet
is the hardest work connected with the
week's washing.

The "1900 Self-Working Washer" does
all the drudgery.

Water pressure, or an ordinary electric
light current (alternating or direct), will
work this washer and do a big week's
washing at a cost of 2 to 4 cents for the
work.

All that is necessary to start the work is
to turn a water faucet or an electric light
key. Then you do nothing more.

And, as soon as a tubful of clothes is washed
a twist of your fingers switches power to the
wringer to wring the clothes out.

You don't have to tend this washer.

It doesn't need anything but mere watching.

It works itself.

No rubbing—no drudgery—no work for you.

Only a twist of your fingers to start or to stop
the washer, or switch the power to the wringer.

All the rest is done by the water, or the elec-
tricity, and the "Self-Working Washer."

And the "Self-Working Washer" saves its cost

over, and over, and over again in washwomen's
wages, lowered laundry bills, and lessened wear
and tear on all your washables.

The "Self-Working Washer" is as great an
innovation to washing as automobiles are to loco-
motion—making mechanical power do the work
human or animal force had to do before.

For the "1900 Self-Working Washer" will wash
the finest linens, lawns and laces, and get them
spotlessly clean, without breaking a thread.

There is nothing about this washer that can wear
out your clothes, nor tear them; rip seams nor
fray edges; pull off buttons nor break them.

And the "1900 Self-Working Washer" will wash
bed blankets, comfortables, carpets, rugs, and get
them as clean as clean can be.

To prove this, use a "1900 Self-Working Washer"
one full month **FREE**.

We will send one to any responsible party and
prepay all freight. Send us no money.

You can use this washer for four weeks' wash-
ings, and then, if you don't find it all we claim—if
you don't see how it will save its own cost—save
wear and tear on all your house linen and wash-
able clothes—save time and trouble and servant
worries—just return
the washer at my
expense and the
matter will be
closed.

The trial costs
you not a
penny.



We make this offer because we know
the "1900 Self-Working Washer" will do
all we say—and save all we say.

And if you keep the washer, you can, if you
wish, pay for it out of what it saves for you. Pay
us by the week or by the month (suit yourself)
until the washer is paid for. Write for our cata-
log today. Your request will bring you our
illustrated Washer Book, by return mail.

Let a "1900 Self-Working Washer" solve your
Wash-Day Troubles—keep your servants contented
—save your laundry bills—and save your clothes.

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Or if you live in Canada, write my Canadian Branch, 355 Yonge St., Toronto, Ontario.

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The quality of the average shoe has lately been going down about as fast as the cost of shoe materials has been going up—exactly as we told you last year. But the Regal standard of quality and workmanship is what it has always been—the *best*. There's been no change. We couldn't afford to have it otherwise. We are virtually ripping Regals open—like the famous Regal Buzz-Saw ripped them—*showing* that the finest Oak-Bark-tanned leather procurable is used in the soles, heels, toe-boxes and counters and that the upper leather is the best that money can buy. The Regal Specifications Tag is taking the place of the Buzz-Saw. It gives you *signed proof* of those highest-quality materials—and you get it *before* you buy.

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sake. We
have an
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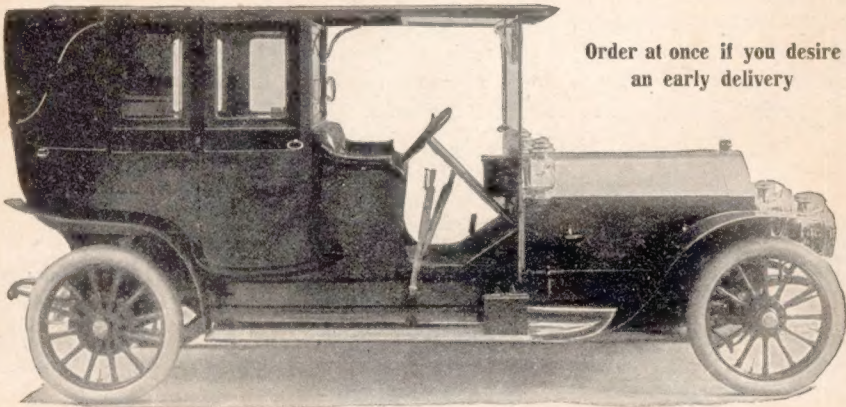
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